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LIVES

OF

THE ITALIAN POETS.

BY THE

REV. HENRY STEBBING,

M.A. M.R.S.L.

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WITH TWENTY MEDALLION PORTRAITS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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The Life of Boiardo.

Boiardo.

THE lives of few of the Italian poets offer more subjects for dispute than that of the Count Matteo Maria Boiardo. It would, however, afford as little instruction as amusement to the general reader to lead him over the thorny field of such a controversy, and it will be sufficient to state, that he was of an ancient and noble family of Reggio, which, in the fourteenth century, was divided into several branches, and that his immediate ancestors had enjoyed, for many generations, the Lordship of Rubiera.* His birth is supposed by some writers to have occurred in June, in the year 1430; the

* Giannandrea Barotti, Let. Ferraresi.

name of his father being Gasparo, and that of his mother Cornelia degli Apj.* The laborious and sceptical Barotti, however, asserts that he was the son, not of Gasparo and Cornelia degli Apj, but of Giovanni and Lucia Strozzi, sister of Tito Strozzi, and that he was born about the year 1434. The place of his nativity is also equally a matter of doubt; Fratta, near Ferrara, have been generally allowed the honour, but Ferrara, Scandiano, and Reggio all claim the same title to respect.

Little is known for certainty of the early years of his life. According to most of his biographers, he was the pupil of the celebrated Soccino Benci,† a Peripatetic and Platonic philosopher, and, under his care, became skilled in the civil law, and other liberal sciences. He also received instruction, it is said, in the Latin and Greek languages in the school of Guarino Veronese, the resort of the noblest men in Italy. The improvement which he reaped from these advantages of study, was made apparent in several compositions of considerable merit, and his Latin and Italian verses, together with some translations from the Greek classics, obtained the favourable attention of Borso Duke of Modena. By his learning and natural accom-

* Mazzuchelli. † Tiraboschi, Biblioteca Modenese.

plishments he speedily became one of the most popular men about the Court, and the princes of the house of Este took him under their especial protection, and advanced him to the highest offices of the State.

While acting as the Minister of Borso, he accompanied that Prince to Rome, when he went to receive the investiture of the dukedom of Ferrara, and the rose of gold from Pope Paul the Second. Borso died the same year, (1471,) but Boiardo was regarded by his son and successor, Hercules, with equal affection, and, as his private Chamberlain, enjoyed his confidence in the most important affairs of government. It is also said, that, shortly after his return from Rome to his fief of Scandiano, he married Taddea Gonzaga de' Conti di Novellara, who was received by his vassals with extraordinary pomp and rejoicings.

When Hercules was preparing for his espousals with the Duchess Eleanora of Arragon in 1472, Boiardo was one of the nobles who were chosen to conduct her to Ferrara; besides which honourable mission, he was appointed to undertake several others to the courts of the most powerful princes of Italy. As a reward for the faithful performance of his charge, he is said to have been created a

Cavalier about this period, and in 1478 he was made Governor of Reggio, in which capacity he presented the water with which the new Bishop, Buonfrancesco Arlotti, bathed his hands on taking possession of that diocese.*

In the year 1481 he is found distinguished in a contemporary chronicle by the title of Captain, which had been conferred upon him on his removal from the command of Reggio to that of Modena. While governor of that town, he took a conspicuous part in the nuptials of the Count Nicolò Bangoni with Bianca, the sister of Leonora, wife of Gilberto Pio. Records remain to prove that he continued in the government of Modena till the year 1486 or 1487, but, in the following year, he was again in the command of Reggio.

While enjoying the favour of his Prince, exercising the functions of a courtier and soldier, and sharing in all the gay and splendid pomps which marked the life of a feudal Baron in those days, Boiardo devoted his leisure time to the cultivation of literature. In order to pursue his studies without interruption, he was accustomed to retire on these occasions to his estate of Scandiano; and, among its wide and sylvan retreats, he composed,

* Mazzuchelli.—Tiraboschi.

it is said, the chief part of his poems. From the scenery in its neighbourhood he is also supposed to have drawn many of his fairest descriptions, while the names of his feudatories furnished him with appellations for his heroes—Gradasso, Mandricardo, Sacripante, and others.

According to the same popular but doubtful report, it was while hunting in the woods of Fracasso, a short distance from Scandiano, that he discovered a name for his chief character. He had been long, it is said, in vain endeavouring to invent one which should be sufficiently sounding for a hero of the highest prowess and valour. All at once Rodomonte started into his mind, and, instantly turning his horse's head towards Scandiano, he rode rapidly to the Castle, and ordered all the bells to be rung in honour of Rodomonte, filling his vassals, it is said, with astonishment, as they had never heard before of such a saint.* As he completed any portion of his poem, he was accustomed to repeat it for the amusement of Hercules and his courtiers; and for the same purpose he wrote his comedy called "Timone," formed out of a dialogue of Lucian's, and composed in the terza rima.

* Mazzuchelli.

After having long enjoyed the reputation of being as great a scholar and poet, as he was a nobleman distinguished for the highest qualities of birth and disposition, he died at Reggio in December 1494, or, as some authors have asserted, in the February of the same year. The place of his burial has been as much disputed as that of his birth, and the few circumstances known of his life. The most creditable writers appear to consider it certain that he was buried in the great church of Scandiano.* By his wife Taddea Gonzaga he had two sons, Cammillo and Francesco Maria, and four daughters. His younger son died while a child, but he was succeeded in the fief of Scandiano by Cammillo.

Of the ladies, to whom his amatory poetry is addressed, nothing is known, except that the name of the one was Antonia Caprara, and that of the other Rosa. According to the investigations of the curious on this subject, there was a lady of the name of Antonia Caprara, born at Reggio in the year 1451; and if, it is said, this was the identical Antonia whom Boiardo loved, she was eighteen, and he thirty-five, when he declared his passion.† But there are, on the other hand, so many expressions in his verses which scarcely agree

* Tiraboschi. † Panizzi.

with this supposition, that to reconcile all opinions on the question, he is allowed to have loved many ladies, or, as it ought to be put, perhaps, to have written love verses to many. It should not be forgotten however that, according to the calculation above alluded to, he had loved the fair Antonia about two years with great ardour, and had continued to address her with many passionate expressions to the very eve of his marriage with the daughter of the Count of Novellara.

The details of Boiardo's life are few and uninteresting. I have looked through a variety of works in the hope of finding more extensive materials for a memoir, and from the fear of suffering any thing to escape which might be either useful or interesting to the reader; but my search has been vain, and I am not a little gratified at finding that my want of success has not been owing to any neglect in research, but to the real absence of materials; the able and laborious scholar, Mr. Panizzi, whose edition of the "Orlando Innamorato" is just published, not having been able to discover any thing further respecting his favourite author.

But the life of Boiardo has little to interest, not only from the scantiness of the notices which remain respecting it, but, as it would seem, from its

actual want of variety or incident. He was, it is true, occasionally engaged by his Prince on foreign missions, and he took part in many a gay and chivalrous festival, but his time passed pleasantly on, nothing occurring to awake any of those stronger passions which mar the dreams of romance. Sometimes in Ferrara, and at others at Scandiano, he shared his hours between the splendid amusements of a courtier, and the luxurious reveries of a poet. The rank and fortune he possessed secured him from the cares to which by far the greater number of literary men are subject; and, which was still further conducive to the tranquillity of both his mind and his life, he reaped the golden harvest of fame as quickly as he sowed the seed. Unlike most other writers, especially of long narrative poems, he had not to wait for years before he could meet the encouraging smile of applause, or to labour at correction, and then depend, when all is finished, on the capricious humour of the public. As soon as a Canto was composed, he took it with him to Ferrara, and there in the presence of a brilliant Court, of which every member, from the Prince to the youngest page, was prepared to applaud him, he recited his gay and charming inventions.

But though the life of Boiardo is thus rendered unimportant in the page of literary biography, the case is very different if we consider his work, and the influence it had on the poetry of Italy. When his name is remembered as associated with the first great romantic poem that favoured land of the Muses produced, he has a claim upon our respect, far inferior certainly to that which is due to the sublime Dante, or the elegant and noble-minded Petrarch, but sufficiently great to place him above all preceding Italian poets, whether narrative or otherwise.

Of the origin of romantic poetry this is not the place to speak. The subject is an interesting one, and has been treated of in a manner worthy of its importance. The learning of many of the best scholars, both in this and other countries, has been unsparingly employed in tracing the legends and other materials of romances to their source, and success has in a considerable measure crowned their labours. At the head of these erudite critics we may justly place our own Warton, whose conclusions have for the most part been either followed or confirmed by the greater number of subsequent writers on the subject.

From the researches which have been thus car-

ried on with equal taste and diligence, it is proved beyond a doubt that nearly all the traditions, out of which so many beautiful fictions have been formed, were founded on real or analogous circumstances. We have thus a curious fact pressed upon our attention, which is, that the poetry which appeals most strongly to the imagination, which is the wildest and most rarely attentive to the laws of probability, draws its inspiration from the real history of the world, and that thus the strictest epic and the most fanciful romantic poems have a similar origin. There was certainly as much general truth in the records of Charlemagne and his mighty Paladins as in those which preserved the memory of Agamemnon and Achilles. All poetry, indeed, which can attract the attention of a people not highly refined, must be either devotional or narrative, and the latter will no more be listened to with interest unless its foundation be recognised and known as true, than the former would if addressed to a Deity unknown in the popular creed. It is difference of circumstances in the times when the poems are produced, which gives to one age or nation an epic, and to another a romance. Had the Greeks been less free, or less inclined to politics when Homer wrote, they would have had a romance; and if

instead of composing for a feudal Prince and his vassals, Boiardo had been writing for Florence, he would either have written in the half-laughing strain of Pulci, or attempted a narrative adapted to the acute intellect of his readers, as well as their love of heroic narrative—in other words, his work would have been more an epic than a romance. Nor ought it to be forgotten, indeed, that while he was amusing the people of Ferrara and their nobles with wild and sometimes extravagant legends, Florence had learnt to understand and relish the stern, sedate language of her Dante, of which the foundation was severe satiric truth, and the ornament and colouring only imaginative; that there also the classic Petrarch, and the clear tasteful Boccaccio were the chief favourites of every class of people, while Lorenzo de' Medici and his friends had begun to make poetry the professed vehicle of philosophy, and almost to enthrone the latter on the hitherto opposed seat of the Muses. It is seldom we find opportunities of comparing the state or progress of literature in different provinces of the same country; but the literary history of Italy affords them in abundance, and is hence the most interesting of any in the world, enabling us to trace with no little degree of exactness, the in-

fluence of political circumstances on the intellectual tastes and habits of the people, and furnishing more materials for solving the great question respecting the connexion between certain forms of government and species of literature than any other whatever.

Boiardo's minor poems, chiefly on the subject of his love, are written in a much more elegant and polished style than his "Orlando Innamorato," which has been accounted for by the superior care he took in the composition of the former, and the circumstance that he died before he could put the last hand to his larger work. Another reason might be found, perhaps, in the different nature of the two subjects. But it was not only as a poet that Boiardo was distinguished among the writers of his age: he was deeply learned in classical literature, and the following list of his works will show that he was not less erudite than many of the scholars who graced the palace of the Medici. 1. Apuleio dell' Asino d' Oro, tradotto in Volgare. 2. L'Asino d' Oro St. Luciano. 3. Erodoto Alicarnasseo Istorico, tradotto. 4. Chronicon Romanorum Imperatorum a Carolo Magno usque ad Othonem IV. 5. Le Vite da Emilio Probo tradotte. 6. Carmen Bucolicon. 7. Il Timone. 8. Sonetti e una Canzone. 9. Cinque Capitoli. 10. Pastorali.

The Life of Sannazzaro.

Sannazzaro.

JACOPO SANNAZZARO was born at Naples on the twenty-eighth or twenty-ninth of July 1458, and was a descendant of the Sannazzari, a noble family of Pavia, of whom Dante makes mention in his Convivio. After, however, having enjoyed very large possessions in the kingdom of Naples, it was gradually stripped of the wealth acquired by the valour of its different members, and the father of our poet had only sufficient to support his family in the most moderate style of respectability. He lived but a few years after the birth of Jacopo, whom he left, with another son, to the care of their mother Masella, whose necessities obliged her to

remove immediately to Nocera de' Pagani. From Giuniano Majo, a distinguished grammarian of Naples, he derived his earliest acquaintance with the Greek and Latin classics; and so great was his master's expectation of the reputation he would one day acquire by the talents he evinced, that he strongly persuaded Masella to fix her residence at Naples, assuring her that whatever exertions she made to finish the education of her son would be amply repaid in a few years. The advice of Giuniano was taken, nor was his prediction unverified; but before Jacopo had completed his studies, he became enamoured of Carmosina Bonifacia, a lady of noble family.

The passion he had evinced for poetry at an early period of his youth had now an object, and was speedily exercised in the composition of sonnets and canzoni. Such was the excellence of his verses, both Italian and Latin, that they attracted the attention of the Court, and Frederick, second son of Ferdinand the First, received him into his house, and became his affectionate friend and patron. To gratify the Prince's love of dramatic representations, Sannazzaro composed several pieces in imitation of the ancient satires; among others, one intitled "Gliomero," containing all the

words and phrases which were peculiar to the vulgar of Naples. By this and similar attentions to the wishes of his patron, and other noble personages of the Court, he became a general favourite, and obtained the regard of the King, and of Alfonso Duke of Calabria, whom he followed to the war in Tuscany.*

On the accession of Prince Frederick to the throne, after the kingdom had suffered a series of ruinous troubles, Sannazzaro expected that standing as he did so high in the young monarch's favour, he should be promoted to some of the valuable offices he had it in his power to distribute among his followers. He was, however, disappointed. Frederick gave away the governorship of towns with a liberal hand to other courtiers, but on the poet he only bestowed a pension of six hundred ducats and the villa Mergoglino. At first Sannazzaro complained bitterly of this treatment, and asked the King how it was that he had made him a poet to dispose of him as if he had been an agriculturist.† But the beauty of his retreat, and the enjoyment he found in the uninterrupted leisure it secured him, soon reconciled him to his lot, and his villa formed the favourite theme of his muse, and was

* Volpi. † Ep. I. Lib. i.

regarded in his later years with as great an affection as if it had been the place of his birth.

But it is probable, though the poet taught himself contentment, and gave a value to the provision made for him which did not in reality belong to it, that he had not been treated by the King with the attention their long intercourse had given him a right to expect. Whether, however, there was or was not unkindness on the part of the patron, the poet felt himself aggrieved, and this was sufficient to render his subsequent conduct worthy of no slight praise. Frederick, unable to support himself on his throne, was obliged to seek an asylum in France; most of his courtiers, as is usual in such cases, deserted him; but among the few who had sufficient fidelity to accompany him to the land of his exile was Sannazzaro, and when there was scarcely another whom the changed fortunes of their master did not speedily disgust, he continued at his side, employing every means in his power to cheer him in his distresses. Among other instances of his affection was his selling a large portion of the property he inherited from his father, and giving the greater part of the sum it brought him to help the monarch in his necessities. To the last hour of the unfortunate Frederick's life, the attachment

Sannazzaro thus evinced remained undiminished, and it was not till he had followed him to the grave that he could resolve upon returning to his own country.

On his arrival in Italy he found the enemies of his master in the full enjoyment of the power of which they had despoiled him; his feelings took fire at the sight of objects with which were associated the recollection of his patron's early kindness, and he attacked both the Pope and Duke Valentine in satires of uncommon virulence. He also refused the proferred friendship of the celebrated Gonsalvo of Cordova, surnamed the Great Captain, and thus continued to show his decided attachment to the cause of Frederick as long as any reasonable opportunity could be found for thus expressing it.

His beloved Bonifacia died during his residence in France, and if we may judge from his manner of mentioning her in his poems, he regarded her loss as one of the heaviest afflictions he could have suffered. But he was not long, it appears, in finding consolation for this misfortune. He had no sooner taken up his residence in Naples, than his society was sought by all the principal personages of the Court and city; and among the ladies of the

former was one, the charms of whose person and conversation speedily captivated his heart. This lady's name was Cassandra, and she enjoyed the particular favour of the Queen, of whom she was the most intimate companion. Sannazzaro's attachment, however, was, it appears, entirely Platonic, otherwise it would be difficult to account for his employing the singular means he used to prove its fervour. Cassandra's accomplishments had inspired the Marquis della Tripalda with a passion sufficiently strong to induce him to seek her hand in marriage. His offer was accepted by the lady, and the union was on the point of taking place, when the Marquis repented, and applied to the Pope for a dissolution of the contract. Sannazzaro, in the true spirit of Platonic chivalry, took up Cassandra's quarrel, and wrote to Bembo, begging him to use his utmost influence to prevent the nullifying of the marriage; but his application was too late, and the lady remained free to receive his addresses in any form he might think proper to make them. He only continued, however, as before, to show his devotion by the pleasure he took in her conversation, and praising her as the most accomplished of her sex. In one respect, perhaps, he equalled a more ardent lover. At a later period,

on the removal of the Court to Somma, in consequence of the appearance of the plague at Naples, he and Cassandra also fixed their residence there, but the mansions in which they had apartments were more than a mile distant. Notwithstanding this, Sannazzaro, who at the time was near seventy years of age, never suffered a day to pass without walking to see his mistress, whose smiles and conversation were considered amply sufficient to reward him for his pains.

But amid all other circumstances he never suffered himself to lose sight of his literary reputation. The "Arcadia," a mixture of pastoral prose and poetry, and various sonnets and other miscellaneous pieces, had long employed his attention, and contributed to establish him in a respectable rank among the writers of his country; but Latin poetry was the fashion of the age, and he feared that, unless he left some monument of his skill in classical composition behind him, his name would be speedily forgotten. With this idea in his mind he began his poem entitled "De Partu Virginis," and continued it with a degree of patience and care scarcely credible. One of his most intimate friends was a gentleman named Poderico, blind and greatly advanced in years, but remarkable for his

elegant taste and his acquaintance with the best authors of antiquity. To him Sannazzaro read every passage of his poem as he composed it, and such was the nicety of the critic's ear and the caution of the author that the latter would write as many as ten separate lines to express the same idea, leaving it to the choice of his friend which should stand in the poem. Twenty years were expended in this manner before the work was finished, and when it is considered how confined the reputation is which Sannazzaro enjoys on account of the "De Partu Virginis," we can scarcely find a better instance to prove the folly of such a wasteful expenditure of time and ingenuity. The poem was first inscribed in 1521 to Leo X., the great patron of classical learning; but as he died before the author could reap the advantages he expected from his patronage, he dedicated it in 1527 to his successor Clement VII. He was ever destined, however, to suffer disappointment in his hopes of gain. Clement expressed his gratification on receiving the poem, and added, that he should be happy to see Sannazzaro at Rome whenever he could find an opportunity to visit him, but he gave him neither office nor pension. This disappointment, however, was not the only source of the uneasiness which occasionally

disturbed his otherwise not untranquil life. When the Prince of Orange fixed his quarters at Naples, the French General, Lutrec, in preparing for the siege of the city, posted his guard in the Villa Mergoglino and its neighbourhood. The Prince, considering this position to be too advantageous to leave it in the hands of the enemy, sent a detachment of his troops to destroy the villa and whatever building might serve as a shelter or defence for the French. But the reasons which convinced the Prince of Orange of the necessity of this measure made no impression on the mind of the poet, who, on seeing his favourite residence in ruins, conceived the most implacable dislike against its destroyer. So virulent were his feelings, that his anger continued undiminished to the hour of his death; and it is said that being told, as he was on the point of expiring, of the Prince's having fallen in battle, he declared that he could die easy, as that wretch had met with his deserts. The death of Sannazzaro took place about the year 1532, and he was buried in a chapel he had built upon the site of his ruined villa, and to which his name and remains have given an additional consecration. His personal character appears to have been compounded of the usual number of human

failings blended with a due proportion of good qualities. He was devotedly faithful to his friends, and bold in expressing his sentiments in their favour; but he was violently passionate and resentful against the persons who did any thing to provoke his anger. He was commonly accused of meanness in his manner of living, but his generosity to his master in distress more than counterbalanced any fault of this kind, even were it rightly laid to his charge, which may be doubted; while in matters of religion, his founding a convent and erecting two chapels on the site of Mergoglino prove that he was not deficient in feelings of devotion or in readiness to show them. His conversation is said to have been lively and ingenious, and some of his witticisms have been preserved. On being present one day when several persons, and among others some medical men, were discussing which was the most general disease, he offered to decide the dispute, and, on being asked to do so, he replied, that the fever of hope killed more persons than any other. On a similar occasion, when some physicians were consulting as to what remedy was the best for weakness of sight, he observed, that envy was more likely than any thing else to quicken the power of vision. Of those whom he saw foolishly

proud of a noble ancestry, he said, that they were like persons who dressed themselves up for a masquerade in royal robes. When any allusion was made to the popularity of his Arcadia, he never expressed any feeling of gratification at the circumstance; and on being asked the reason of this indifference, he replied, that there is little security for the fame which has no better foundation than the praise of the vulgar. In his person he was above the middle stature, but being lame his height was not perceived; and, like the great Petrarch, he became gray at a very early age.

As a poet, Sannazzaro rested his chief claim to consideration on his Latin poem, De Partu Virginis, and on his Arcadia in Italian; but his miscellaneous pieces, and more especially his celebrated Piscatory Eclogues, are ingenious and elegant. The "De Partu Virginis" is rightly regarded as among the most perfect specimens of classical composition of which modern times can boast; and when it is considered how difficult it is to explain the mysteries of theology in verse in any language, and how much more so in one which contains no phrases originally proper for the purpose, Sannazzaro will be allowed to merit all the praise he has received for the "De Partu Vir-

ginis." Vida alone, who was contemporary with him, and published the Christiade about the same period, rivals him in the elegance and propriety of his language, but to these two accomplished writers belong, by general consent, the brightest laurel of the modern Latin Muse.

The Arcadia places Sannazzaro in a still more elevated situation, as it was the first pastoral poem of any importance produced in Italy; and to the popularity it acquired and the real beauty of many of its passages, may, in a great measure, be ascribed the exquisite compositions of a similar kind which subsequently enriched the poetical literature of the South.

The Life of Ariosto.

Ariosto.

THE family of Ariosto was settled at Bologna in very remote times, and is said to have sprung from the Aristi, or Aravisti. Though this idea is controverted by most of the authors who have treated of his genealogy, the antiquity of his race is undisputed, as is also the immediate cause of the distinctions enjoyed by his father and other relatives. On the marriage of Lippa Ariosto with Obizzo III. Marquis of Este, that lady, as celebrated for her attachment to her family as for her singular beauty and accomplishments, persuaded most of her friends to remove with her to Ferrara, where they were established by her influence in many important

offices. Niccolò, the father of the poet, increased the honour of the family, and after having been sent several times ambassador to the Pope, and filled the highest stations in the Court, was at length chosen governor of Reggio. While in this situation he married Daria, a lady of the Malaguzzi family, the noblest in Reggio, and on the 8th of September 1474, she gave birth to her first child, the celebrated subject of this memoir.*

The youth of Lodovico was rendered remarkable by his early passion for works of imagination, and while still employed about the elements of learning, he composed a little drama from the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, and taught his brothers and sisters to perform it. Niccolò saw with satisfaction these indications of his son's genius, but his fortune, though respectable, was not great, and his family in a few years had increased to five sons and five daughters. Seeing, therefore, little hope of independence for Lodovico, he destined him to the study of the civil and canon law, the usual resource in that day for men of talent and family but little wealth. By the time he was fifteen, he was considered sufficiently advanced in the knowledge of Latin and the other rudiments of education

* Fornari. Pigna. Barotti : Letterati Ferraresi.

to be sent to Padua, where he spent five years, striving in vain to master his hatred of jurisprudence, and employing the chief part of his time in the perusal of French and Spanish romances. There appears, indeed, reason to believe that he almost totally neglected even the study of the classics during this period. Before he removed to the university, he was celebrated among his friends for skill in Latin; and Tito Strozza, a man of rank, used to amuse himself by provoking learned disputes between his own son, a boy of the same age, and Lodovico. It also is said to have been either before or shortly after his removal to Padua, that he pronounced a Latin oration, which delighted all who heard it by the propriety and elegance of the language; while in one of his satires, on the other hand, in which he alludes to his unprofitable residence at the university, he describes himself as scarcely able to construe the fables of Æsop.

From a fear probably that his son might entirely lose his taste for study if he confined him to that of the law, Niccolò was induced to desist from his intended plans. Having seen him, therefore, reach the age of twenty without exhibiting any signs of legal ability, he had the good sense to call him home, and again free him to the cultivation of general

literature. This, however, does not appear to have been done till he had employed his authority and reproofs, again and again, to no purpose. Lodovico cherished the most respectful affection for his parent, but in this one point he strove in vain to exercise it, and perhaps considered it as a duty by no means imperative to sacrifice his feelings and the peace of his life to the hope of making a fortune. A curious anecdote is related to show how impenetrable he was to all exhortations on the subject. It happened one day that Niccolò was more than usually severe in expressing himself respecting the indifference and idleness of which he was guilty. The young poet seemed to listen attentively, but made no attempt at defending himself, till his father went out of the room, when his brother Gabriel, who had been present at the interview, renewed the attack. On this, the accused commenced a serious argument on the points in dispute, and made out so clear a case, that his brother asked in astonishment, why he had not answered his father in a similar manner! "Because," replied Lodovico, "while he was storming, my mind was wholly occupied with observing his words and actions, for in a scene of the play I am

writing, I introduce a young man and his father disputing as we have been."

As soon as he had obtained his release, which he is said to have owed in some measure to the intercession of his relative Pandolfo Ariosto, he put himself under the instruction of Gregorio da Spoleti, then residing at Ferrara, and who was equally skilled in the Latin and Greek classics. Lodovico at first confined his attention solely to the former, the miserable style in which the law commentaries were written, having conspired with his own idleness to destroy his previous facility in Latin composition. The progress he made with Gregorio was proportionable to his own talent and the eminent ability of his tutor. He read the best of the Roman poets with the most critical attention, Horace occupying the first place in his estimation, and Plautus and Terence the next. His love of dramatic composition seems indeed to have been always great. The first effort of his mind was the little play above mentioned, and to his latest years he continued to recreate himself by similar pursuits. The fruits of his present studies appeared in the form of two dramas, the one called "La Cassaria," the other "I Suppositi," the cha-

racters of which he persuaded his brothers and sisters to represent, and usually had them acted whenever his father and mother went from home. Unfortunately for him, Gregorio was called from Ferrara by Isabella of Naples, who appointed him preceptor to her son, and Lodovico was left without the present means of gaining instruction in Greek. To the regret he experienced at losing his master was added that of hearing soon after of his decease; but scarcely had he recovered from the distress he felt at this circumstance, when the death of his father put an end for some time to all his literary thoughts and pursuits. He has pathetically described his situation at this period in his sixth Satire, which contains several allusions both to the present and previous circumstances of his life.

Mi more il padre, e da Maria il pensiero
Drietro a Marta bisogna, ch' io rivolga;
Ch' io muti in squarci, ed in vacchette Omero:
Trovi marito, e modo, che si tolga
Di casa una sorella, e un' altra appresso;
E che l' eredità non se ne dolga:
Coi piccioli fratelli, ai quai successo
Era in luogo di padre, far l'ufficio,
Che debito, e pietà m'avea commesso.
A chi studio, a chi corte, a chi esercizio
Altro procure che nel fin non pieghi

Da le virtudi il molle animo al vitio.
Nè questo è solo, ch' a li miei studj nieghi,
Di più avanzarsi, e basti, che la barca,
Perchè non torni a dietro, al lito leghi.

My father dies; thenceforth with care oppress'd
New thoughts and feelings fill my harass'd breast;
Homer gives way to lawyers and their deeds,
And all a brother's love within me pleads:
Fit suitors found, two sisters soon are wed,
And to the altar without portions led.
With all the wants and wishes of their age
My little brothers next my thoughts engage,
And in their father's place I strive untired
To do whate'er that father's love inspired.
Thus watching how their several wills incline
In courts, in study, or in arms to shine;
No toil I shun their fair pursuits to aid,
Still of the snares that strew their path afraid.
Nor this alone—though press we quick to land,
The bark's not safe till anchor'd on the strand.

The duties which he thus describes himself as having to encounter on the death of his father, he performed, though still but twenty-four years of age, with the attention and prudence of a man long accustomed to the cares of a family. So entirely were his thoughts engrossed by these occupations, that he neglected all the pursuits which were most

agreeable to his taste. Neither Greek nor Latin was allowed to interfere with the claims of his brothers and sisters, and it was not till his friend Pandolfo persuaded him to resume his studies, that he again turned over the pages of his forsaken Horace. Scarcely, however, had the spark of literary ambition been re-awakened, when he was deprived of his affectionate kinsman by death, which affected him so deeply that he was on the verge of despair.*

But he was now twenty-nine years of age, and his Latin verses, together with some poems in Italian, remarkable for their tenderness and spirit, had recommended him to the notice of literary men of eminence. His reputation for talent was in a short time generally diffused, and at length obtained him the patronage of the Cardinal Ippolito of Este, into whose service he entered soon after the death of Pandolfo.† He speaks, however, in the Satire already quoted, as if he felt the necessity which led him to this connexion as the greatest evil he ever suffered. "To the death of my father and friend," says he, "was added this, that I should be oppressed with the yoke of the Cardinal d' Este."

* Fornari. † Garofalo.

To the annoyances, however, which attended his capacity as a courtier, might be opposed the opportunities he enjoyed of conversing with a succession of learned and accomplished men, whom Ippolito was proud to see in his palace. Assisted by their advice, and animated to emulation by the honour in which they were held, he continued to cultivate his genius with new ardour, and, in his thirtieth year, conceived the idea of writing a poem which should place him among the celebrated bards of his country. He was long doubtful as to what subject would be most suited to his genius, and at the same time answer the purpose of a compliment to his patron, the Cardinal, and the other members of the house of Este. His first intention was to celebrate the actions of Obizo, a young warrior of that family, who had greatly distinguished himself in the struggle between Philip-le-bel and our King Edward. He even began a poem on this subject, in the terza rima of Dante, but he found, it is probable, not only the verse unsuited to the style of an epic, but the plan too confined for his fertile and wandering imagination. Soon growing weary, therefore, of this design, he next directed his attention to the unfinished poem of Boiardo, which was read with

universal delight, and had gained so complete an ascendancy over public taste, that every other species of poetry is said to have been wholly neglected.* His long study of the old romance writers, and the peculiar turn they had given his genius, rendered the subject of Boiardo's Orlando the most fascinating that could have been presented to his fancy; and he quickly saw that the poem might be continued in such a manner as not only to include the most flattering praises of his patrons, but to secure even a greater degree of popularity than that obtained by his predecessor. These considerations were sufficient to determine him as to a subject; and, taking the Orlando Innamorato for the supposed commencement of his poem, he resolved to continue the adventures of the principal personages till he brought them out of the labyrinth in which Boiardo had left them.

Having collected the materials which were to form the ground-work of his poem, he commenced its composition. Bembo, with whom he lived on terms of close intimacy, strongly persuaded him to write it in Latin verse, of which he said he was more perfectly master than Italian, adding, that if he did so, he would obtain a much greater reputa-

* Garofalo.

tion than otherwise. Ariosto replied, that he should prefer being one of the first writers in the Tuscan language to occupying scarcely a secondary place among those who wrote in Latin.*

He had not proceeded far in his work, when he was interrupted by an invitation from Alphonso, the Duke of Ferrara, and brother of the Cardinal Ippolito, to undertake an embassy to the Pope, Julius the Second. The object of this mission was to avert, if possible, the threatened vengeance of the Pontiff against Ferrara. Ariosto was received at Rome with respect, and obtained a more encouraging answer than had been expected. The Duke, on his return, highly applauded him for the manner in which he had conducted the affair; but the hopes they had conceived from the reply of Julius proved vain, and the Ambassador had hardly delivered his message, when the river Po was seen covered with an armament composed of Papal and Venetian forces. A desperate engagement ensued between the hostile fleet and that which Alphonso immediately sent to oppose its progress. Ariosto was present in the battle, and rendered additional service to his employer, by taking one of the enemy's largest vessels.

* Idem.

The enterprize of Julius terminated in his complete defeat: but he was still to be dreaded, and Alphonso seems to have trembled at having won the victory. Still anxious, therefore, to obtain peace with the head of the Church, he determined upon sending another embassy to effect that desirable object. But it was not easy to find any one sufficiently bold to undertake the commission. One courtier after another manifested his unwillingness to expose himself to the fury of Julius, still raging at the disgrace of his defeat; and the Duke saw himself in the most unpleasant dilemma, till our poet again volunteered his services. To Rome accordingly he repaired; but, instead of the respect shown him on the former occasion, he was given to understand, by some secret adviser, that unless he made his escape from the city with the greatest speed and caution, his life would fall a sacrifice to his temerity. He obeyed the intimation, and reached Ferrara in safety.*

On the accession of Leo X. to the Pontifical throne, in 1513, Ariosto conceived the most sanguine hopes that his fortune would be considerably improved. He had been long known to Leo and others of the Medici, and seems to have kept up an inter-

* Garofalo.

course with them which warranted his expectation of patronage as soon as the condition of their affairs might put it in their power to serve him. Leo, therefore, was no sooner installed in his high office than Ariosto hastened to Rome; nor was he discouraged by the reception which he met with on his arrival. The Pontiff, as he has described in one of his Satires, gave him his hand and embraced him with every sign of cordial esteem; but his kindness went no farther, except to grant him a Bull or licence for the publication of the Orlando; and the disappointed poet, seeing no indications that his company was longer desired, left Rome the day after his arrival, preferring to sup at a little inn, a few miles distant from the city, to staying in the neighbourhood of a court where he saw himself treated with so much neglect. He returned by way of Florence, which he visited, it is supposed, for the sake of being present at the spectacles exhibited on the festival of St. John the Baptist. A more important object, however, is assigned by some authors as the cause of this visit, and the poet is represented as spending months and even years there in order to perfect himself in the Tuscan dialect.* It is not easy to decide which of

* Salviati. Mazzuchelli.

these opinions merits most attention; it is not impossible that Ariosto visited Florence with the intention of being present at the festival, so attractive to a man of his chivalrous imagination, and that he remained there some months after, not forgetting during his stay to study the niceties of his language, if there were any of which he was not yet perfect master. It is supposed that he had spent some time at Florence before this period, and had probably many acquaintances in the city. At the period of which we are speaking, he resided in the house of a gentleman named Niccolò Vespucci, and there became acquainted, as is generally believed, with the beautiful Alessandra, a relation of his host, and who seems to have captivated his heart as she sat making a scarf for one of her sons who was to appear in the tournament.*

He seems to have enjoyed, after these occurrences, sufficient leisure to attend to the composition of his poem, so inopportunely interrupted at its commencement: and, though often called upon by the Cardinal to execute business foreign to his taste, he pursued his favourite occupation with unremitted steadiness. At length, in the year 1515, he had so far completed his design, as to allow of

* Orlando Furioso, c. 42. st. 93.

his presenting the work to the public; and either in this or the following year the first edition was printed at Ferrara. The poem, however, as it then appeared, was far from being such as he desired. He regarded it as incomplete, both in its plan and style; and the reason he alleged for bringing it thus imperfect before the world, was his anxious desire to discover what would be the opinion of the public respecting its merits, and to obtain the criticisms of eminent scholars in different parts of Europe.* But whatever praise he obtained from others, he certainly met with no encouragement from the Cardinal. On his presenting him with a copy of the work, that worthy Churchman rudely asked him "Where he had collected such a mass of fooleries?"

Soon after this occurrence, a circumstance happened which put an end to their connection. Ippolito, in the year 1518, was preparing for a journey to his Bishopric of Buda, in Hungary, and, desirous of seeing himself surrounded by as splendid a retinue as possible, he invited Ariosto to accompany him. But neither the health of the poet nor his inclination rendered the prospect of such a journey agreeable, and he decidedly re-

* Garofalo.

fused to leave his country. The arguments he offered in excuse of this refusal, availed nothing with his haughty patron, who, on leaving Ferrara, is said to have manifested towards him the strongest dislike, which soon after appeared in actions that could only have resulted from a confirmed hatred.

The fortune which Niccolò left among his ten children afforded but a small portion for each, and Ariosto had mainly depended upon the patronage of the Cardinal for support. It would, indeed, be difficult to believe that a man of his free and noble mind, and so fond of retirement, would have subjected himself to the annoyances of dependance, could he have lived without it in any manner befitting his station. Nor did the service which Ippolito exacted of his followers consist of mere flattering attentions to his dignity. They were expected to attend his summons at all hours of the night, and the commissions with which he charged them were frequently dangerous as well as fatiguing. That Ariosto would have suffered his quiet to be thus broken, is only to be accounted for as above; and, when he separated from the Cardinal, he found himself in a situation far from enviable. The twenty-five scudi which he had received as a sort of pension every four months,

were no longer remitted him; and the loss of this, though a small sum in return for the services of such a man, was a considerable abridgement of his means of support, even in retirement.

But the journey to Hungary presented so many horrors to his fancy that he willingly resigned both his pension and all farther hopes of patronage rather than undertake it. A dislike of travelling, of changing his habits of living, or even his diet, was one of the peculiarities of his character, and Hungary, of all parts of the world, seemed to threaten him with evils of this sort in greatest abundance. Contentedly resigning himself, therefore, to his present fortunes, he resolved to bid adieu to courts and patrons, and wholly occupy his time with revising and enlarging his poem and other similar pursuits. To be the freer from interruptions, and at the same time render his moderate income equal to his support, he left Ferrara and took up his residence on an estate belonging to his kinsman Malaguzzo, between Reggio and Rubiera. He has described this retreat, and the pleasant manner in which he spent his time during his short residence there, in his fifth Satire; but it is disputed whether the account alludes to this or an earlier period of his life.

Già mi fur' dolci inviti a empir le carte
I luoghi ameni, di che il nostro Rheggio
E'l natio nido mio n' ha la sua parte:
Il tuo Mauritian sempre vaghegghio
La bella stanza, e 'l Rodano vicino,
Da le Naiade amato ombroso seggio:
Il lucido vivaio, onde il giardino
Si cinge intorno, il fresco rio che corre
Rigando l' erbe, ove poi fa il molino.
Non mi si po de la memoria torre
Le vigne, e i solchi del fecondo Iacco,
Le valle e 'l colle, e la ben posta torre.

Time was when by sweet solitude inclined
The storied page I fill'd with ready mind;
Those gentle scenes of Reggio's fair domain,
Our own dear nest, where peace and nature reign;
The lovely villa and the neighbouring Rhone,
Whose banks the Naiads haunt serene and lone;
The lucid pool whence small fresh streams distil
That glad the garden round and turn the mill;
Still memory loves upon these scenes to dwell,
Still sees the vines with fruit delicious swell,
Luxurious meadows blooming spread around,
Low winding vales and hills with turrets crown'd.

The death of the Cardinal Ippolito, who did not live to return from Hungary, produced another change in his fortunes. The Duke Alphonso, seeing him left without a patron and provided with so

small an income, invited him to return to Ferrara, which he did, and found no reason, it is said, to regret that he had once more put himself under the protection of the house of Este. Alphonso, knowing his love of retirement and the peculiarity of his habits, promised to leave him at perfect liberty to pursue his studies and live in the way that most suited his wishes. He kept his promise, and there is reason to believe that the presents he bestowed on the poet enabled him to build the cottage in which he resided, with few interruptions, till his death. This favourite house of Ariosto's was situated near the church of S. Benedetto, and stood in the midst of a spacious garden which formed both his pride and delight. Here he continued to compose additional cantos to the "Orlando Furioso," and occasionally, to relax his mind with lighter species of poetry, sometimes writing a satire, and at others reverting to the comedies composed in his younger years, and which he subsequently made fit for the stage.

The caution with which he proceeded in his larger poem rendered the work of revision long and painful. After having done every thing in his power to improve a passage, he would still be doubtful as to its correctness, till Bembo or some

other literary friend had united their judgment with his own. The reason alleged for this extreme particularity is curious; "not having had a master in his younger days," says one of his biographers, "to guide him to the highest perfection of the art, he desired to supply that defect by the company of worthy and enlightened men." *

But even now his tranquillity was not permanent. Alphonso employed him in various affairs of importance, which drew him from his home, and prevented, for a time, the prosecution of his poetical labours. These interruptions, however, were brief, and he returned to his quiet residence still better prepared to delight in its repose and security. A much worse hinderance to his comfort was the smallness of his income. He had received from the Duke the grant of a small annual sum resulting from one of the public taxes, but the tax was taken off and the poet left without any remuneration for the loss of his little revenue. A portion also of the property which had descended from his ancestors was claimed on the one side by a distant relation, a monk, and on the other by the ducal chamber, as of right belonging to the State. The first judge who tried the cause, instituted in conse-

* Fornari.

quence of these different claims, was Ariosto's personal enemy; and the second had sufficient cunning to persuade him to give up the contest without fairly pressing his pretensions. At length, however, a field was found for the employment of his abilities as a man of business. The territory of Garfagnana, which had placed itself under Alphonso's protection, was everywhere infested with dangerous hordes of banditti, and required the presence of a vigilant magistrate. Ariosto was chosen by the Duke as commissary for the distracted province; but it is not easy to explain the reasons which led to such an appointment. He thus speaks of it in his fourth satire:—

Ricorsi al Duca, o voi Signor levarmi
Dovete di bisogno, o non v' incresca,
Ch' io vada altra pastura a procacciarmi.
Grafagnini in quel tempo, essendo fresca
La lor revoluzion, che spinto fuori
Avean Marzocco a procacciar d' altr' esca.
Con lettere frequenti, e ambasciatori
Replicavano al Duca, e facean fretta
D' aver lor capi, e loro usati onori.
Fu di me fatta una improvvisa eletta,
O fosse, perchè il termine era breve
Di consigliar chi pel miglior si metta:

O pur fu appresso il mio Signor più leve
Il bisogno de' sudditi, che 'l mio;
Di ch' obligo gli ho, quanto se gli deve.
Obligo gli ho del buon voler, più ch' io
Mi contenti del dono, il quale è grande
Ma non molto conforme al mio desio.

Compelled at length I next the Duke address'd—
Or aid me now, or thus, with want oppress'd,
Let me depart elsewhere to seek relief.—
Just then Marzocco, Garfagnana's chief,
Driven from the state, had left the people free
To choose their prince, and better laws decree.
Anxious to gain the Duke's support, they send
Ambassadors and letters without end;
And thus importunate they still implore
That he the rule would take and peace restore.
He yields and calls me to the post; but why,
'Twere hard, I own, to give a clear reply:
From haste, perchance—perchance from greater zeal
To seek his servant's than his people's weal—
Whate'er the cause, I thank him as I ought,
The kindness great, though small the good it wrought.

It seems probable, from these lines, that the prudence and experience of the poet were superior to those of most of the other courtiers; and, on the other hand, that this was the most profitable office with which his master, at that time, could

reward his services. The serious diminution also of his small property rendered him, in some measure, uneasy as to a provision for his declining years; and, when it is considered that he was deprived of the disputed lands by a law-suit, instituted by the Government, and that Alphonso attempted nothing in his favour, the probability is increased that he was offered and accepted the appointment to Garfagnana as a compensation for his loss, and as the only means of bettering his fortunes.

But however this may be, he proceeded to his station, and pursued his measures with so much care and ability, that a considerable improvement was quickly visible in the condition of the province. He not only succeeded in restoring tranquillity, but obtained the affections of the people, who regarded his person with a respect amounting to veneration. A singular instance is on record illustrative of the popularity he enjoyed:—being obliged one day to pass over a wild part of the district, the forests of which were known to be the resort of banditti, led by the celebrated chiefs Dominico Marocco and Filippo Pacchione, he was somewhat disconcerted at seeing his path crossed by a large body of armed men coming out of the woods. As he was attended by only six followers, resistance

to an attack he knew would be vain. Neither he nor his party, however, encountered any interruption till his servant, who had loitered behind, on coming up, was asked by one of the banditti who the gentleman was that had just passed them. Being answered that it was Ariosto the poet, he immediately spurred his horse forward, and, pulling off his hat as he approached him, said that he was Filippo Pacchione, and was come to apologize for having suffered so great a man as Ariosto to pass him unsaluted.* A story very similar to this is quoted by Hoole from Baretti's preface to his Italian Library. The translator considers it as the same incident told in a different manner: but the state of the people of Garfagnana was sufficiently unsettled to allow of their commissary's being more than once exposed to the danger of interruption by banditti. "Ariosto," says Baretti, "took up his residence in a fortified castle, from which it was imprudent to step out without guards, as the whole neighbourhood was swarming with outlaws, smugglers, and banditti; who, after committing the most enormous excesses all around, retired for shelter against justice amidst

* Garofalo.

the rocks and cliffs. Ariosto, one morning, happened to take a walk without the castle, in his night-gown, and in a fit of thought forgot himself so much, that, step by step, he found himself very far from his habitation, and surrounded on a sudden by a troop of these desperadoes, who certainly would have ill used, and perhaps murdered him, had not his face been known by one of the gang, who informing his comrades that this was Signor Ariosto, the chief of the banditti addressed him with intrepid gallantry, and told him, that since he was the author of the Orlando Furioso, he might be sure none of the company would injure him; but would see him, on the contrary, safe back to the castle. And so they did, entertaining him all along the way with the various excellencies they had discovered in his poem, and bestowing upon it the most rapturous praises:—a very rare proof of the irresistible powers of poetry, and a noble comment on the fable of Orpheus and Amphion, who drew wild beasts and raised walls with the enchanting sound of their lyres." On another occasion, having to meet a person on business at Lucca, he was accosted, on his arrival there, by a numerous body of the most respectable persons

of the neighbourhood, who had assembled for the purpose of showing him respect, and had also prepared a splendid banquet in his honour.*

Having spent three years in Garfagnana, he returned to Ferrara, but not till after he had received several letters from his friend Pistofolo, the Duke's chief minister, in vain persuading him to accept the office of Ambassador to the Pontifical Court.† Besides his disinclination to travel, another reason is assigned for his refusal to visit Rome, the See of which was now possessed by Clement VII., his known friend and admirer. This additional motive for his love of home was, according to common report, his strong attachment to a lady of Ferrara; but none of his biographers have been able to say who she was, or to throw any light upon the circumstances of his connection with her. The only fact known with certainty is, that he had two sons, Virginio and Giovanna Battista; but whether they were borne him by the lady alluded to, or were the offspring of a former amour, is not decided. It has been asserted, that he was secretly married, and that his wife was the Alessandra mentioned in his poems; while the perfect silence which he preserved respecting this

* Fornari. † Mazzuchelli.

union, is supposed to be accounted for by the circumstance of his holding preferments in the Church, of which the publicity of his marriage would have deprived him. By far the greater number of authors, however, who have treated of his life, observe that his two sons were never regarded as other than illegitimate.

On his return to Ferrara he again established himself, with his two unmarried sisters, in the house he had built near the church of Saint Benedict, and resumed his former occupations. Of his lighter amusements, gardening was that in which he took most pleasure; and it is curious to know that he was as fond of altering the plan of both his house and grounds, as he was of remodelling the stanzas of the Orlando. His son Virginio proposed writing an account of his illustrious father's life; but, unfortunately, he never pursued his design beyond the commencement, and a few memorandums are all that have come down to us. From these, however, we learn the singular fastidiousness of Ariosto in his horticultural amusements, and some other traits of his character, which render him not the less an object of our veneration, by showing us the simplicity as well as power of his mind. "In gardening," says Virgi-

nio, " he pursued the same plan as with his verses, never leaving any thing he had planted more than three months in the same place: and, if he set a fruit-tree, or sowed seed of any kind, he would go so often to examine it, and see if it were growing, that he generally ended with spoiling or breaking off the bud. As his knowledge also of flowers was very limited, he many times mistook the plants which might be springing up by chance in the neighbourhood, for those he had set, and he would watch them with the greatest care till he was put beyond doubt as to his mistake. I remember, that having once sown some caper-seed, he went every day to see what progress they were making, and was delighted, in a short time, with observing that they flourished extraordinarily well: he at last, however, discovered, that he had mistaken a young elder-bush for his capers, and that his plants were not yet above ground."

We learn, from the same interesting document, that he had at first no intention of building a house for constant residence in this garden, but that, having raised a mere cottage for temporary shelter, he grew so fond of the spot, that he wished never to leave it. The structure, after all, was not fully suited to his taste, and he felt as great an in-

clination to improve it by continual alterations as his garden. His constant lamentation was, that he could not change the arrangement of his house as he could that of his verses; and a person having asked him one day, how it happened that he who could describe castles and palaces so magnificently, had built such a cottage, he replied, that he made his verses without the aid of money. That he was not a little proud, however, of his small but pleasant retreat, is proved by his putting an inscription over the door, signifying its convenience and adaptation to his circumstances:—

"Parva sed apta mihi, sed nulli obnoxia, sed non
Sordida, parta meo sed tamen ære domus."

In his favourite garden he passed many hours of the day, deriving new inspiration from its green and refreshing solitudes. The Orlando was still in progress, and still under correction, his confidence in himself, it seems, having been little increased either by years or practice. In speaking, however, on this subject, he was accustomed to say, that poetry might be compared to a laurel, which sprung up of itself, and which might be greatly improved by cultivation, but would lose all its natural beauty if too much meddled with:—this

is the case, he would continue, with stanzas, which come into the mind, we know not how, and which may be improved by the correction of a little original roughness, but are deprived of all their grace and freshness by too nice a handling. A story illustrative of his feelings on a similar point, is told by Sir John Harrington in his "Life of Ariosto," appended to his translation, and which, he informs us, 'was briefly and compendiously gathered out of sundry Italian writers.' "As he himself could pronounce very well," says Sir John, "so it was a great penance to him to hear others pronounce ill that which himself had written excellent well. Insomuch as they tell of him, how, coming one day by a potter's shop, that had many earthen vessels ready made, to sell on his stall, the potter fortuned at that time to sing some stave or other out of Orlando Furioso, I think where Rinaldo requesteth his horse to tarry for him, in the first book, the thirty-second stanza:—

'Ferma, Baiardo, mio, deh, ferma il piede
Che l' esser senza de troppo mi nuoce.'

Or some such grave matter, fit for a potter. But he plotted the verses out so ill-favouredly, (as might well beseem his dirty occupation,) that

Ariosto being, or at least making semblance to be, in a great rage withal, with a little walking-stick he had in his hand, brake divers pots. The poor potter, put quite beside his song, and almost beside himself, to see his market half marred before it was a quarter done, in a pitiful sour manner, between railing and whining, asked what he meant, to wrong a poor man that had never done him injury in all his life. 'Yes, varlet,' quoth Ariosto, 'I am yet scarce even with thee for the wrong thou hast done me, here before my face; for I have broken but half a dozen base pots of thine, that are not worth so many halfpence, but thou hast broken and mangled a fine stanza of mine, worth a mark of gold.'" There is a great similarity between this story and an anecdote related of Dante, who, it is said, punished a blacksmith and muleteer for a like offence. The temper and fastidiousness of these great men respecting their verses, render it sufficiently probable that the traditions are in both cases correct.

Six editions of the "Orlando" had been now given to the world, the first, namely, in 1515, the second in the following year, and the third in 1521, all which were printed at Ferrara. In 1526 a fourth appeared at Milan; and in the following year

it was printed at Venice, where another edition was also published in 1530. None of these editions extend beyond forty cantos, and they are far from being so correct as the later ones: but their number will serve to show how generally popular the work had become, even in the lifetime of the author.*

By his services in Garfagnana, Ariosto had acquired an additional claim to the consideration of Alphonso. In his character as a useful servant of the state, he stood on an equal footing with the most esteemed members of the court: his talents had been tried in the most difficult affairs, and had never failed to produce some good effect, wherever they had a fair field for exertion. He had, indeed, gained the hearty affections of his master, and it was the serious desire of the Prince to employ him in some manner which might still attach him to his person without greatly invading his love of leisure or retirement. The passion of the Duke for theatrical amusements, and Ariosto's known taste for dramatic composition, furnished the former with a ready means for the exercise of his regard. Instead, therefore, of again sending him from his beloved retreat, or imposing upon him an office of

* Mazzuchelli.

labour and difficulty, he appointed him to superintend the arrangements which were making for the performance of the regular drama at his court. No employment could have better suited the poet's inclination. He immediately drew out a plan for the theatre, which was closely followed; and so superb and convenient was the structure, when finished, that it was the admiration of all Italy.

But the great advantage Alphonso reaped from his choice of Ariosto for this office, was his ability to supply the stage with more perfect dramas than had been hitherto written by any modern author. Leo X. and his courtiers were the first to bring scenic amusements of a higher order into fashion. They restored the language of the theatre to its old classical style, and bestowed an attention upon this object, which, however favourable to its improvement, scarcely agreed, as has been rightly observed, with their station or functions.* But it was to Ariosto that the practice of writing comedies in verse owed its commencement. The "Cassaria and I Suppositi," already mentioned, were originally written in prose, and remained unaltered till Alphonso's fondness for the drama induced

* Tiraboschi.

the author to remodel and turn them into verse. These, and four others, which he wrote on a similar plan, were performed in the magnificent theatre pertaining to the court; and such was the estimation in which they were held, that Francesco, the son of the Duke, publicly pronounced one of the prologues, while the characters themselves were represented by the first personages of Ferrara.

Four years were spent in these gay and easy occupations; and, so much were his comedies admired, that they tended to increase even the high reputation he had acquired by the Orlando Furioso. It appears, however, that they had not yet made any impression on the Venetians, for Fabbroni, having seen one of them at Ferrara, conceived the design of bringing it out at the theatre of Venice, but found himself wholly disappointed in the result. The name of Ariosto gathered together a numerous audience, and its expectation was raised to the utmost, from the idea that all the heroes and magical scenes of the Orlando would be represented to the life: the disappointment of the spectators, therefore, was extreme, when they found that characters, of which they had never before heard, were to occupy their atten-

tion; and so strong was the expression of dissatisfaction, that the performers were obliged to withdraw before the play was half concluded.

But neither the desire of contributing to Alphonso's amusement, nor his own relish for dramatic composition, could tempt Ariosto to neglect the great design on which he rested his hope of immortal fame. Plays and satires, and even epigrams, frequently employed his muse; but they were only written to relax his mind after a long and serious attention to the Orlando, as Statius, it was observed, composed his "Sylvia," to relieve him from the severer labour attending the composition of his "Thebaid." In the year 1532, the result of his protracted exertions appeared in a new edition of his work, much altered by his careful and repeated corrections, and enlarged by the addition of six new cantos. The most precious fruit of his life and genius was thus again brought before the world; and the anxiety with which he watched the impression which this improved edition would make upon the public, was scarcely less than that which he felt on the first appearance of the poem seventeen years before. It was with feelings, therefore, of the deepest distress, that he found that the printing of the

work was so bad and incorrect, as to deprive it almost entirely of the advantages of his cautious revision. In writing to a friend on the subject, he emphatically described his vexation, by saying, that "he had been assassinated by his printer."

It is probable that this circumstance, combined with the fatigue attending his close application while preparing the edition for the press, had a serious effect on his health, which now began to exhibit signs of rapid decline. The only complaint from which he appears to have hitherto suffered, was a slight asthmatic affection, and a weakness of digestion, which rarely diverted him from his usual occupations. But in the spring of 1533, he was seriously attacked with indigestion, and the method which his physicians employed to remove it, acting too violently upon his constitution, the malady daily assumed a more alarming appearance. It is a curious circumstance, that the origin of his complaint was attributable to his hasty manner of eating, to which he was so prone, that he seldom allowed himself time to masticate his food. The temperance for which he was remarkable, prevented its being believed that this peculiarity could be owing to any grossness of appetite, and his friends uniformly ascribed it to the utter absence

of mind with which he partook of his meals. To illustrate this point, his son Virginio has left an anecdote on record, which places it beyond doubt that such was the case, unless we choose to accuse the poet of inhospitality. A foreigner having been introduced to him one day, was invited, during their conversation, to partake of some refreshment. A slight repast accordingly being brought in, the stranger modestly waited for some sign from Ariosto to begin; but the latter, taking no notice of his companion, placed himself at the table, and never ceased from eating till he had finished whatever was on the board. On another occasion, his friends at court wishing to prove how insensible he was to the mere flavour of his food, set before him a dish of some very coarse and disagreeable meat, instead of a delicate bird, which he had been led to expect: unluckily, however, for the success of their experiment, a stranger, who happened to sit next him, tasted the dish, and, expressing his surprise, the trick was discovered.

But indifference to the temptations of the table proved, in his case, as fatal as their undue indulgence in others. The constant application of medicine to remove the oppression under which he

laboured brought on a consumption, and on the night of the 6th of June 1533, he breathed his last, his death, it is worthy of mention, having been preceded only a few hours by the total destruction of Alphonso's splendid theatre by fire.

Ferrara, all Italy, and even Europe, lamented Ariosto as the first poet of the age, and as worthy of being enrolled in the same chart of fame with the greatest that had ever lived. His funeral was rendered remarkable by the attendance of a large body of monks, who to honour his memory, followed him, contrary to the rules of their order, to the grave. His son Virginio shortly after built a small chapel in his garden, and formed a mausoleum to which he intended to remove his remains, but the same monks prohibited it, and the body was left in the humble tomb in which it was originally deposited, till the new church of S. Benedetto was built, when Agostino Mosti, a gentleman of Ferrara, raised above it a monument more worthy of the poet. In 1612 his great-grandson, Lodovico, erected a still nobler one, and removed the ashes of his ancestor from the tomb of Agostino, as the latter had done from the one in which they were originally deposited. This monument of Lodovico, which still

exists, is built of the most costly marble, and adorned with two statues representing Glory and Poetry, together with an effigy of the poet in alabaster. The inscription is as follows:—

D. O. M.

Ter Illi Maximo, Atque Ore Omnium Celeber-
Rimo Vati, a Carolo V. Cæsare Coronato, No-
Bilitate Generis Atque Animi Claro, In Rebus
Publicis Administrandis, In Regendis Populis,
In Gravissimis Ad Summos Pontifices Legationi-
Bus Prudentia, Consilio, Eloquentia Præstan-
Tissimo, Ludovicus Areostus Pronepos, Ne Quid
Domesticæ Pietati Ad Tanti Viri Gloriam Cu-
Mulandum Defuisse Videri Possit, Magno Pa-
Truo, Cujus Ossa Hic Vere Condita Sunt P. C.

Anno Salutis MDCXII. Vixit An. LIX. Obiit
Ann. Sal. MDXXXIII. VIII. Idus Junii.

Notus Et Hesperiis Jacet Hic Areostus, Et Indis,
Cui Musa Æternum Nomen Etrusca Dedit;
Seu Satyram In Vitia Exacuit, Seu Comica Lusit,
Seu Cecinit Grandi Bella, Ducesque Tuba,
Ter Summus Vates, Cui Docti In Vertice Pindi,
Tergemina Licuit Cingere Fronde Comas.

The 'à Cæsare Coronato' has given rise to much controversy, but it has been fully proved that Ari-

osto was never formally crowned. He wrote a jesting epitaph in Latin for himself, which runs thus:—

Ludovici Areosti humantur ossa
Sub hoc marmore, seu sub hac humo, seu
Sub quidquid voluit benignus hæres,
Sive hærede benignior comes, sive
Opportunius incidens viator,
Nam scire haud potuit futura, sed nec
Tanti erat vacuum sibi cadaver
Ut urnam cuperet parare vivens,
Vivens ista tamen sibi paravit,
Quæ inscribi voluit suo sepulchro,
Olim si quod haberet is sepulchrum,
Ne cum spiritus exili peracto
Præscripti spatio misellus artus,
Quos ægre ante reliquerat, reposcet,
Hac et hac cinerem hunc et hunc revellens,
Dum norit proprium, diu vagetur.

Pope adopted this epitaph, and called it an inscription "For one who would not be buried in Westminster Abbey," meaning himself:—

Under this marble, or under this sill,
Or under this turf, or e'en what they will;
Whatever an heir, or a friend in his stead,
Or any good creature shall lay o'er my head,

Lies one who ne'er car'd, and still cares not a pin,
What they said or may say of the mortal within,
But who living and dying, serene still and free,
Trusts in God that as well as he was he shall be.

It is not, however, the easiest task, to which the imagination can be put, to make the living man speak as if he were already dead; and Dr. Johnson has with an amusing acuteness observed on Pope's imitation, that "when a man is once buried, the question under what he is buried is easily decided; he forgot that though he wrote the epitaph in a state of uncertainty, yet it could not be said over him till his grave was made."

Ariosto had no need to write his own epitaph; besides that engraved on his monument, a great number were written by his various admirers, and several others by unknown persons, on different sides of the tomb. Nor has the place of his rest wanted other marks of respect. More than one royal traveller has made a pilgrimage to his grave; and when the excellent Joseph II. had to pass through Ferrara, and could scarcely spare time for refreshment, he devoted the short hour he spent in the town to show his respect for the memory of Ariosto. His visit to the tomb was celebrated by

several poets of the day, one or two of whose sonnets are preserved and cited by Barotti.*

The person of Ariosto is described by his biographers with little variation in their language. His figure was large and well-formed, except about the shoulders, which were disproportioned to the rest of his person, and were rendered still more so in appearance by his habit of stooping as he walked. His step was slow and measured, and the expression of his countenance indicative of habitual contemplation. His thin cheeks and dark complexion added still farther to the gravity of his looks, while his bald and lofty forehead, the rest of his head being covered with dark curling locks, his black and penetrating eyes, and thick bushy beard, gave him the appearance of a man different from the common race of mortals. Nor was he wanting in the milder graces of person. His lips were beautifully formed, and when he smiled expressed the soft and amiable sentiments which so often grace his descriptions; his voice was clear and harmonious, and all his gestures indicative of a lofty but affectionate disposition.

Of his general character and sentiments we may form, says one of his biographers, an accurate

* Let. Fer.

opinion from his poems, and especially from his satires, in which the opinions he utters seem to have been dictated by the purest morality, "and I will courageously assert," says the same writer, a man of learning and gravity, "that if he had lived in our days he would have afforded an example worthy of imitation, and made a conspicuous figure among the men whom we are accustomed to regard as most moral in their habits."* And certainly if the love and exercise of justice, forbearance under injuries, temperance in living, humanity and kindness towards inferiors, and a pure and unshaken attachment to independence, can make a man worthy of this praise, Ariosto richly deserved it; but we must not forget to lament his errors while we admire his virtues, nor buckle on charity as an armour that we may fight with security against truth. The amours of Ariosto are a difficult theme for both his eulogists and his biographers. He has alluded in his poems to several ladies with whose charms he was captivated, but, with the exception of Alessandra and Genevre, the names under which they are mentioned are fictitious. His caution in this respect is thought to have been hinted at in the device

* Barotti.

placed on his favourite inkstand, and which consisted of a little Cupid having his fore-finger on his lip in token of secrecy. The ladies, however, above mentioned seem to have been excepted from the usual custom of the poet, and it is believed, as before observed, that Alessandra was his wife. If this were the case, the only reason that can be alleged for his keeping his marriage a secret is his having embraced the ecclesiastical profession, which he is said to have done at a former period of his life, and to have obtained benefices which he must have resigned immediately, had his marriage been made known to the world. The evidence in proof of Alessandra's being his wife is, in fact, little short of unanswerable.

In two letters, written to Messer Giovan Francesco Strozzi, we find her mentioned as if she was not only his habitual companion, but recognised as such by his intimate friends of both sexes. In the first of these epistles, dated Ferrara, January 21, 1532, he tells Messer Strozzi that Madonna Alessandra desired to be remembered to him and his sister, and that she had sent the latter two pieces of silk for which she paid a scudo of gold, obtaining them with difficulty at that price, as the Jew

from whom she purchased them required four lire. In the second, dated Ferrara, June 21, 1532, he says, that he had just returned to Madonna Alessandra as the messenger arrived with Messer Strozzi's letter, and after mentioning some late occurrences and giving his opinion upon them, he adds, that Madonna Alessandra also thought in the same manner.

In addition to the conjectures which these letters, and the opinion of more than one early author on the subject, lead us to form, we find from the preface to Barotti, whose work was published after his death, that shortly before his decease his friend Frizzi convinced him that Ariosto was really married to Alessandra, bringing certain documents which put the fact beyond a doubt, and that had he recovered sufficiently to revise his work, he would have made the subject clearer to the public than had hitherto been done. According to the records above alluded to, Alessandra was the widow of Tito di Leonardo Strozzi, a nobleman of Ferrara, and it is conjectured that she was the same lady with whom the poet became enamoured at Niccolò Vespuccio's.* It is believed, however, that the marriage did not take place till the latter part of

* Tiraboschi.

Ariosto's life, and that neither Virginio nor Giambattista, who were legitimatised in 1530 and 1538, sprung from the union, but that the former was the son of a person known by the name of Orsolina, and the latter of some one whose name has hitherto escaped the most diligent research. Whoever were the mothers of Ariosto's sons, he paid the most diligent attention to their education. The younger entered the Ferrarese army and died a captain; but Virginio was for some time brought up under his father's instruction, and subsequently sent to Padua, in 1531, to complete his education. On this occasion Ariosto wrote to Pietro Bembo, informing the Cardinal that he had directed his son to call on his reverence the moment he arrived at the University, and begging him at the same time to afford him his favour when necessary, and to watch over him, and admonish him not to waste his time. It was on the same occasion also that he dedicated to him the well-known Satire, in which he alludes to the circumstances of his own youth, and expresses so strongly the noble feelings which marked his character. The sentiments of this production are elevated and powerfully expressed. Near the commencement he says:

Dottrina abbia, e bontà, ma principale
Sia la bontà, che non vi essendo questa
Nè molto quella a la mia stima vale.
So ben, che la dottrina fia più presta,
A lasciarsi trovar, che la bontade.

Knowledge and Virtue—these be all his aim,
But first and chief let Virtue homage claim;
Without her, little should I care to find
Knowledge, far easier gain'd, enrich his mind.

He next entreats the Cardinal to find a tutor for his son who was free from the common vices of the age, and who could make him read, in the proper language of Homer, what Ulysses suffered at Troy and in his wanderings; and to understand what Apollonius, Euripides, and the other Grecian poets wrote; observing that he had himself taught him to read Virgil, Terence, Ovid, Horace, and Plautus, but was now too idle or too weak to open the temple of Apollo in Delos, as he had done the sanctuary of the Muses on the Roman Palatine. With great feeling he then describes the difficulties he had to encounter when a young man in acquiring the advantages he wished to bestow on his son, concluding with another request that his friend would not fail to assist him in his parental cares. But we must now turn from the con-

sideration of his personal to that of his literary character.

Few works have been submitted to severer criticism than the "Orlando Furioso," but if the popularity of a poem be a proper test of its merits, this celebrated production has an undoubted right to be ranked among the noblest efforts of human genius. In a letter of Bernardo Tasso to Varchi, we find him saying that in his time there was not "an artisan, nor a boy, nor girl, nor old man, who had not read it over and over again; that its stanzas formed the comfort of the lonely traveller, who relieved the toil of his cold and weary journey by singing them as he went, and that persons might be heard repeating them in every street and field." At a period when no artificial methods were in vogue for attracting attention to literary works, such a wide and rapidly diffused popularity could be only owing to the real delight inspired by its gay and varied creations. The inquiry, consequently, as to its merits when compared with the more classical productions of the Muse, is reduced to the question, how far the excellence of works of imagination depends on their conformity to certain laws of taste, but which conformity is only to be perceived by the most tutored and refined in-

tellects. Neither Homer nor Virgil was ever read by so many thousands as Ariosto, and never, it is probable, inspired their admirers with a delight so vivid as that felt by the traveller as he sung the story of Orlando. Yet few persons qualified to compare these works, would place the Orlando Furioso above the Iliad, or Æneid, or regard it as manifesting so high a power of intellect; and this because, though it possess every grace and charm with which imagination and verse can invest a composition, it fails in that unity of design which renders an epic poem, according to a justly esteemed author, "the noblest of all harmonious creations—the greatest possible extension given to those laws of symmetry, which, directing all parts to one object, produce in each the pleasure and perfection of the whole."* Ariosto, indeed, was wanting in that power of harmonious combination which, next to the creative faculty of imagination, is the highest quality of mind; and which may be regarded as solely furnishing the link between the inspirations of genius and the operations of art, art being neither more nor less than the power of expressing under one point of view the unlimited and multiform creations of the imagination. That Ariosto

* Sismondi.

was deficient in this respect is sufficiently evidenced by the slight connexion between the different parts of his work, which everywhere presents proofs that it was the offspring of a mind luxurious in invention, but weak in commanding the objects it called forth.

Next to its deficiency in unity may be mentioned its want of a moral, in that sense at least in which the term is usually applied to epic, or dramatic poetry. It seems, indeed, that morality is the true foundation of unity, and that the latter never exists in poetry or painting but when the writer or artist is powerfully impressed with some ruling sentiment, round which his thoughts and the creations of his imagination may cluster, and which may be as an imperishable altar of gold, on which love and romance may safely burn their incense, rendered more precious and odorous by the very sacredness of the altar. Whenever the imagination of an author is stronger than his moral feeling of the subject, or fable, on which he is employed, we may see a gay creation of fairy bowers, of castles and palaces peopled with ladies beautiful as light; we may be soothed, and charmed, and wrapt in pleasant reveries, as we are by music, but we shall feel that they are only reveries—that

the mind must be lulled into repose before we attempt to enjoy them; that they are best understood in sylvan solitudes and by the side of brooks, where the rustling of leaves and the murmur of waters aid the fancy; and that should any accident break the thread of our musings, the whole creation would vanish. But let us read the Iliad, or a tragedy like Lear or Macbeth, or look for some time at a painting on which the moral sentiment of the artist is as strongly impressed as his imagination; and instead of having to humour the fancy that the charm may be kept alive, we shall with difficulty shake off the impression when it is necessary to return to the real business of life. But it is only the few, the Heaven-gifted few, on whom Truth, the ministering spirit of beauty, whether moral or material, bestows her talisman, touched by which the brilliant forms of fancy are filled with life, and become fitly and harmoniously ranged in the same beautiful creation. The scenes described, the forms and elements of inanimate nature, the beings that move and act are then all evidently subjected to the same master feeling—that feeling, namely, of moral beauty which in a few rare instances seems to glow the stronger the more active the imagination, and which holds it in continual subjection, because

genius works emblematically of divine power, and in the real universe nothing is beautiful without truth and order.

But the Orlando Furioso is not an epic, and is therefore not to be judged by the laws to which that species of poem is amenable. Nor is it to be supposed that because a poem is, or is not written in conformity with a certain plan, it merits simply on that account to be placed in a higher or lower class of imaginative works. Unity of plan can give birth to no feeling of admiration when it is merely studied and mechanical—when it is not, in fact, as much the effect of inspiration as the images or sentiments of the work. Though Ariosto, therefore, when compared with the three or four mightiest spirits of our race, may be found wanting, we are bound to honour him as next to them in rank, and infinitely above the most successful imitator of Homer or Virgil that ever lived. In another light also the Orlando Furioso is worthy of the most philosophic attention, as well as of the popular admiration it enjoys. It stands in the same relation to the romantic times of chivalry as the old epics do to those of the heroic classical ages; and in no other work can we see the spirit and the sentiments which at one time gave so rich a co-

louring to European manners, developed with such clearness or magnificence. M. Ginguené observes, in concluding his critique on Ariosto, "that whatever may be thought of the romantic epic, it is a species of poetry separate from all others, and has its *chefs d'œuvre* and its models as well as the ancient and legitimate epic. It belongs," continues he, "altogether to modern Italy, and may boast of having produced one of those great poems which make an epoch in the history of the human mind; which eternally criticised, and eternally praised, runs no risk of falling into that gulf of forgetfulness which swallows up so many others, but will for ever remain an object of interest and discussion among men, and will afford nourishment to the imagination, aid to the arts, and refreshment to the minds of many generations. This is certain—this is sufficient to authorise our admiration and even enthusiasm, and should induce foreigners to read Ariosto not superficially, but with a careful and even profound attention." M. Ginguené then proceeds to quote the opinion of the learned Gravina, who attributes the principal faults of Ariosto to his imitation of Boiardo, and not to any defect in his own taste or genius. The errors which chiefly attracted the notice of that distinguished

scholar are the interruptions which interfere with the thread of the narrative, and principally consist of digressions made for the sake of complimenting the nobles of the Court, or to introduce the story again which had been broken off by these untimely addresses. But the French critic thus apologises for the supposed defect, and ingeniously accounts for its origin:—"To judge rightly," says he, "of Ariosto, the reader must figure to himself the Court of Ferrara, one of the most frequented and most polished that could be found in Italy during the sixteenth century. He must consider it as forming every evening a brilliant circle, of which Alphonso d'Este and the Cardinal Ippolito were the centre; he must forget the subsequent unkindness of the Prince of the Church, and only regard the splendour which surrounds him, his supposed love of letters, and attachment to the poet. In this noble and festive assembly he must imagine the bard to be riveting the attention of all eyes and ears during an hour or more for forty-six evenings. The first day, he proposes his subject; he addresses himself to the Cardinal, his patron; he promises to celebrate the origin of his illustrious race; he commences the recital; but, as soon as he thinks the attention of his audience may be

wearied, he stops, saying, that what remains to be told, is reserved for another canto. The next day, the party again assemble, and wait with impatience the appearance of the poet: he enters, and, after some short reflections on the capriciousness of love, resumes the thread of his story. The third day, he changes his tone and method, and consecrates this period of his song to predicting the glory of the house of Este. Having completed his complimentary stanzas, he ceases, and, as usual, promises to renew the recital in another canto, sometimes adding, 'If it be agreeable to you to hear this story;' or, 'you will hear the rest in another canto, if you come again to hear me.' He found these forms established by the custom of the oldest romantic poets; he considered them natural and convenient for his purpose, and he borrowed them. Like these, his predecessors, he also avoids losing sight of his audience, even in the course of the recital: he addresses himself to the Princes who might be presiding at the meeting, and to the ladies who graced it by their presence, not unfrequently apologising when he told some incident which seemed incredible, with such words as these; 'This is very wonderful; you believe it not! but I do not say it of myself, but, Turpin

having put it in his history, I put it in mine.' Place yourself in this point of view," concludes M. Ginguené; "seat yourself in the midst of that attentive assembly; attend—join in its admiration of that fertile genius—that inimitable story-teller —that adroit courtier—that sublime poet—stop when he stops—suffer yourself to wander, to be elevated, to be inflamed as he does himself—lay aside the too severe taste, which might diminish your pleasure: hear Ariosto, above all, in his own language; study his niceties; learn to perceive their grace, their force and harmony, and you will then know what to think of the atrabilious critics who have dared to treat unjustly so true and great a genius."

Whatever, in a word, be the objections, which, in the spirit of theoretical criticism, may be made to the "Orlando," no poem exists more richly deserving the popularity it has enjoyed through successive generations. Imagination never gave birth to a greater, or more splendid variety of scenes, incidents, and characters, and never did poet hold the minds of his readers more completely captive to the charm of his song. At one time, we seem carried by some magic car over wide-stretching countries, varied with every wonder and glory

of Nature; at others, led by a hermit, or the singing of a solitary bird, through green and quiet dells; then again transported through the air, and, making our passage amid gorgeous clouds, we find ourselves on tented battle-fields, or surrounded by throngs of dames or barons, in the hall of some lordly castle. Nor does the charm of the poem consist only in this wild variety and brilliancy of the objects with which it regales the fancy. Both the sentiments and incidents are often exquisitely tender and impassioned: gaiety and splendour give way to pathos, and the music of the verse becomes as deep and plaintive as it was before light and flowing.

Ariosto is said to be remarkably unsuccessful in the speeches which he puts into the mouths of his principal characters, and to fail altogether of dramatic power. This is not a little singular, as he was devoted, from the very commencement of his literary career, to dramatic composition; but, developing his plot by description and narrative, the addition of dialogue became unnecessary, and was consequently, whenever introduced, cold and unimpressive. The remark, perhaps, may be found to hold good in other instances as well as in that of our poet, it being rarely the case that an author

who possesses the superior faculty of representing the workings or effects of passion as nature represents them, that is, by a few mysteriously significant and comprehensive signs, will employ narrative for that purpose. But, if Ariosto was not successful in his speeches, or in that power which, almost without a metaphor, makes the thoughts of the poet breathe and his words burn, he was equal, perhaps superior, to any writer that ever lived, in giving a dramatic interest to his narrative. In most cases, romantic poetry appeals almost solely to the fancy; but Ariosto, by the exquisite management of his scenes and incidents, and even by the colouring of his landscapes, takes hold of our feelings as well as our curiosity, and makes us forget that he is but narrating, from the deep and impressive pathos of the narrative.

In the celebrated controversy which was originated shortly after the publication of the "Gerusalemme Liberata," by the two famous Italian critics, Pellegrino and Salviati, the respective merits of Ariosto and Tasso were disputed with a warmth and display of learning rarely witnessed even in literary controversies. The conclusion to which most persons probably would come, after reading either the poems or the criticisms is, that while the Geru-

salemme, by the loftiness of its style and the regularity of its plan, may claim superiority as an epic, the Orlando Furioso is more fitted to captivate the fancy by the almost infinite variety of its incidents and the exquisite beauty of its imagery. It would be difficult indeed to discover any reason for the endeavours which have been so often made to depreciate the merit of one of these noble poems to enhance that of the other. Few readers who can enter at all into their spirit would wish that Ariosto had confined his brilliant fancy, rejoicing in its fertility, like a child in its feeling of health and activity, by rules; or that Tasso, whose spirit was naturally calm, majestic, and meditative, had encouraged it to wanton in unbounded mirth and freedom.

Of the other works of our distinguished author, namely, his Plays and Satires, it will be sufficient to observe, that the former claim the honour of being the first regular comedies produced in Italy, and that, being written in imitation of the old comedies, they exhibit, in many of their scenes, the humour of Plautus and the delicacy of Terence. His Satires abound in excellent sentiments, and contain many humorous sketches, but they fail in strength and poignancy; and, both from their style

and contents, might be more properly termed epistles. The miscellaneous pieces from his hand, both Latin and Italian, are characterised by the imagination and elegance of language which appear in the Orlando; and several of his epigrams are remarkable for point and beauty of expression. To these productions we may add a dialogue entitled L'Erbolato, several letters, and the five new cantos which he wrote for the Orlando, but which are generally considered very inferior to the rest, and were never assigned their proper place in the poem. He also left behind him several unfinished and unpublished works; but great as is the reputation enjoyed by the Orlando Furioso, the other productions of its author have never acquired much public attention.

The Life of Bembo.

Bembo.

Pietro Bembo was born at Venice on the 20th of May 1470. His father, Bernardo Bembo, a patrician, enjoyed many important posts in the Government, and was noted for his learning, and his mother, Elena Marcella, was of an ancient and noble family. At the age of eight he was carried to Florence, whither his father was sent as ambassador, and thus from his earliest years became imbued with a love of the pure Tuscan dialect. His stay, however, at Florence was short, as his father was recalled about two years afterwards, and he was then placed under the instruction of Alessandro Urticio, with whom he prosecuted his study of

the classics. His time was thus occupied till he reached his eighteenth year, when, on Bernardo's being sent as ambassador to Rome, he was left to settle several affairs at Venice, that he might contract those habits of business which it was thought would be of important service to him in future years. The principal object for which his attention was required on his father's departure was a law-suit, but having come in contact with his opponent on the Rialto, a dispute arose about some document which Pietro had to present to the judges, and proceeding from words to blows, his furious antagonist drove a knife through his hand, and thus fulfilled a dream which, it is said, had terrified Marcella the previous night with apprehensions of the evil which actually occurred.*

On his return from Rome, Bernardo carried his son with him to Podesta, where he remained about two years. He continued his studies, but not, it would seem, to any great extent, as it was only by the persuasion of Alessandro Urticio that he was induced to turn his attention to Greek literature, which that worthy preceptor assured him was an indispensable acquirement to persons who intended to distinguish themselves by their learning

* Beccatelli. Apostolo Zeno.

or eloquence. Pietro, however, who was never wanting in ambition, attended to Alessandro's representations, and eagerly besought his father to allow him the necessary means for pursuing this new branch of education. But to study it in the ordinary manner, or with such opportunities as his own city afforded, would not satisfy him, and he obtained Bernardo's permission to proceed to Messina, in Sicily, where the famous Costantino Lascari was teaching Greek with great success. Accordingly, on the 30th of March, 1492, and in the twenty-second year of his age, he set out from Venice in the company of his friend Angelo Gabrielli, and proceeding by land to Naples, embarked there for Messina, which they reached, after a dangerous voyage, on the 4th of May.

The ardour with which he laboured during the two years and a half he remained in Sicily, was equal to the resolution with which he commenced his course, and it was his common custom to sacrifice his nights as well as days to study.* His improvement was in proportion to his application, and he not only read the language with fluency, but composed in it, at the same time preserving his command over Latin by regular exercises, among

* Casa.

which particular mention is made of a little work on Mount Etna, which he dedicated to the companion of his studies.

On his return to Italy, his extensive knowledge, and the facility and elegance with which he composed in the two languages, acquired him the acquaintance of the most learned men of his country, and his fame spread rapidly over every part of Italy.

It is not precisely known in what manner he passed his time immediately after his return home, but it is supposed that he spent a part of the interim between his return and his going to Ferrara, four years afterwards, at Padua, then celebrated for its school of philosophy.* However this may be, it was the earnest wish of Bernardo that his son should devote himself to the service of his country, in which his eminent talents would have objects worthy of their exertion. Pietro had little inclination to mix in the confusion of political contests; his mind was now too deeply imbued with the love of poetry and philosophy to take pleasure in any thing else, and the reputation he had already acquired by letters, tended still more to confine his ambition to the acquirement of honour

* Beccatelli.

as a man of learning: but his father's request had great weight with him in forming a decision on the subject, and in this state of uneasiness and doubt he went one day to church, praying that God would direct him to that way of life which might be most useful. It happened that the Gospel of the day was the 21st chapter of St. John, in which the words occur that our Lord addressed to his zealous apostle Peter, "Follow me." Bembo took the sentence as applicable to his present condition, and thenceforth determined to apply himself to sacred studies.*

Some time after this occurrence, his father was sent to Ferrara, and as the Princes of that country were as celebrated as any in Europe for their admiration of learning, he was followed by Pietro, who had the satisfaction of enjoying the favour of the Duke Alfonso and his consort Lucretia Borgia, and the distinguished men of their court, among whom were Hercules Strozzi, Jacomo Sadoleto, and Antonio Tebaldeo. In the society of these scholars he continued his studies with undiminished industry, and availed himself of the lectures of Niccolo Leoniceno, who then taught philosophy at Ferrara. He also completed a work he had com-

* Casa Apostolus Zenus apud Casam.

menced some time before, and to which he gave the title of "Gli Asolani," from the name of a villa where he resided when he began the poem. It consisted of dialogues on love, and was written in such elegant Latin verse, that many persons believed it to be the fragment of some ancient composition.

In the year 1500, he returned to his native city, where he took up his settled residence, occasionally spending a short time with his friends at Ferrara, and especially with Strozzi, in whose villa, known by the name of *Ostellato*, or *Villa Strozziana*, he passed many agreeable months of study and retirement. Much of his time at Venice was occupied with the employment furnished him by his office of secretary in the Aldine academy, to which he had the honour of being elected soon after his return from Ferrara, and he thus lived in a manner sufficiently satisfactory to a man of literary tastes and habits. But unhappily the fortune of his father was too limited to support him and his brothers in unprofitable pursuits, and Pietro, therefore, resolved to seek promotion in some other State, where learning was a more valuable commodity than among the merchants of Venice.

In conformity with this determination, he pro-

ceeded to Rome, where he stayed about three months, and then went to Urbino, where he met with a gracious reception from the Duke Guidobaldo, and formed a strict intimacy with Giovanni de' Medici, afterwards Leo X., and his brother Giuliano, who, with many other distinguished Florentines, were then living in exile. His father, however, made another effort to recall his attention to politics, but in vain; and he is reported to have persevered in remaining from home, because an astrologer had told him that he would be more favoured and advanced by strangers than by his own countrymen. In 1512, in company with Giuliano de' Medici he again went to Rome, and shortly after his arrival acquired the esteem of Julius the Second, by deciphering a book sent to the Pontiff from Dacia, and which he had as yet found no one able to explain. His reward was a rich benefice at Bologna; but not long after this the Cardinal de' Medici was elected Pope, and before he left the conclave, the vote of which had raised him to the throne, he named Bembo his secretary, with an annual salary of three thousand scudi, and his friend Sadoleto for his associate in the office.

The favour which he enjoyed with Leo at the commencement of his pontificate, he retained to its

conclusion; and the manner in which he and his companion performed the duties of their office, was universally commended. It has been seen that the accomplished Petrarch rejected the appointment of Apostolic secretary, alleging that he was unable to write in the plain and concise style requisite for a man of business. There was, it is not improbable, much truth in this assertion, though employed only as an excuse to save himself from the galling yoke to which the situation would have exposed him. Bembo and Sadoleto were better scholars than poets, and the elegant brevity and propriety of their epistles deserved the praise they obtained. But besides acting as secretary, the former was repeatedly sent on different missions, which no one but a confidential servant of the Pope could execute; and for his exertions, though not uniformly crowned with success, he was rewarded with benefices, of which the revenue amounted to three thousand florins of gold.

In May or June 1519, he had the misfortune to lose his father, who expired before he could arrive at Venice to receive his last blessing. His affliction at this circumstance was deep, nor was his sorrow lightened, it appears, at his discovering that the circumstances of Bernardo were too embar-

rassed to give him any hope of receiving the fortune he had expected. This disappointment, however, did not prevent his bestowing on his niece, at whose nuptials he presided, a dowry of three thousand florins; after which he returned to Rome, and applied himself with such unceasing perseverance to business during the day, and study at night, that he fell into an illness from which his physicians almost despaired of his recovery.* At the persuasion of the Pope and other friends, he resolved to try the efficacy of the baths of Padua, which had the desired effect; but he was no sooner restored to health, than he lost his patron Leo, and considering this as a divine monition to return to the peaceful occupations of literature, he determined to bid adieu to courts, and accordingly hired an excellent house at Padua, where he fixed his permanent abode.†

In the furnishing of this residence and that of his favourite rural retreat, Villabozza, in the neighbourhood, he expended considerable sums of money, and exercised his taste in collecting works of art, which it was become the fashion of the wealthy to see around them. While his library was supplied with the rarest manuscripts, his cabinets were

* Beccatelli. † Idem.

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crowded with the relics of Egypt and Greece, and learned men from all parts of the country sought his mansion as one of the most elegant retreats of learning and philosophy in Italy. Thus provided with an ample income, and possessing all the means for prosecuting his favourite studies with success, he found himself in the enjoyment of that enviable repose and comfort which form the brightest prospect the imagination of a literary man can create. Instead of having to compose either orations or epistles on matters of business, he was free to follow the original inclination of his mind, and he produced at this period the chief of his most esteemed pieces both in Latin and Italian.

At the election of Clement VII. he returned to Rome, but only for the purpose of showing his respect to the new Pope, or, in the words of his Italian biographers, "to kiss his foot." He was attacked during his brief visit with another serious illness, and probably on this account hastened back to Padua quicker than he otherwise would. The first object which engaged his attention on his return, was the publication of a volume of prose pieces which he had presented to Clement in manuscript. This took place at the end of 1524, or in the beginning of the following year; and his reputation for

learning and ability was so great in Venice, that on the death of Andrea Navagero, who had been appointed to write the history of that Republic, he was chosen to perform the important and honourable task.

Though at the time of his receiving this mark of respect from his countrymen he was sixty years old, neither his faculties nor his enthusiasm for study had suffered decay. The course of his literary pursuits had not yet led him to historical composition, but this in no way deterred him from the undertaking; and choosing the Commentaries of Cæsar as his model in respect to style, he began his work with the zeal and spirit of a youthful scholar. He suffered nothing during its progress to divert his mind from the proper performance of the design, and it was not till the death of Clement or the accession of Paul III. that he intermitted the inquiries in which he was now so deeply involved.

The Church of Rome was at this time, even according to the confession of its most resolute advocates, disfigured to a frightful degree by the vices of all orders of its clergy. Paul, therefore, seeing the necessity of seeking some remedy for the dangers with which it was threatened, resolved

to begin by introducing into the college of Cardinals men of approved ability. The Republic of Venice, in the mean while, had obtained his permission to name some eminent individual of that State for the high honour of the purple. So many, however, were the candidates who presented themselves, that the Senate found it difficult to choose between them, and at last requested the Pope himself to make the nomination. Paul, on the recommendation of Cardinal Contarini, immediately named Bembo, who, it is said, was perfectly unaware of what was passing in his favour. The statement, perhaps, as to his ignorance and unconcern about this affair, ought to be received with some hesitation. Padua was not so far from Venice that a man like Bembo was likely to remain unacquainted with what was passing in its councils; and there is little reason to believe, from any passage in his life, that he would regard an appointment of either dignity or profit with indifference. But whatever might be his feelings on the subject originally, they were speedily put in motion by the manner in which his nomination was received by a strong party at Rome. So far from owning him to be a fit person for the dignity, they asserted that his writings were more like

those of a heathen than of a Christian believer; and that instead of his adorning the high station by the purity of his character, it would be disgraced by the known disregard of which he was guilty to the laws of the Scriptures and the Church.

In explanation of this accusation it must be mentioned, that Bembo had given very substantial cause for the severity with which his character was treated. He had for several years not only enjoyed one of the chief posts in the Pontifical government, but been in possession of many large and important benefices, and nearly the whole of this time he lived in open connexion with a mistress, by whom he had three children, and whose praises he publicly celebrated in his verses. If the character, indeed, of this man be considered, it will enable us to form some idea of what the Roman Church must have been at the period to which we allude. The few persons who opposed his election to the purple are generally represented as his personal enemies or rivals; but with the exception of these his nomination was received with the highest applause, and he was regarded as fitted to become one of the greatest ornaments of the sacred college. But what virtues, it may be fairly asked, had this celebrated writer exhibited to merit being

placed among the "eminentissimi" of a Christian Church? Or in what manner had he shown his zeal for the establishment, except in seeking the richest benefices it could confer, and living upon their revenues in ease and luxury?

The opposition, however, which was made to his election roused his indignation, and he replied to the invectives of his enemies by writing a long letter to the Pope in defence of his conduct and character, which had the effect of confirming the Pontiff in his original intentions, and he was created a Cardinal on March 24, 1539. The reception he met with from his brother Cardinals was such as might be expected by so great a favourite with the Pope; and he began his career as a prince of the Church with the most flattering prospects. His friends Sadoleto, Contarino, Morono, and Cortesio, had already been advanced to the same station, and he enjoyed in the company of these distinguished men the first fruits of his good fortune.

But it has to be mentioned to the credit of Bembo, that shortly after his receiving the purple he entered the priesthood, and determined thenceforward to devote his attention more exclusively to the duties of his high station in the Church. Though he continued, therefore, his "History of

Venice," he now began the serious study of theology, and read the works of St. Gregory and other esteemed authors on divinity. This attention to his profession was not left unrewarded, and the bishopric of Gubbio becoming vacant he was appointed to that diocese in July 1541. Shortly after this he returned to Padua, where he remained some months; and was again resident at the Pontifical court the following year, when he received the additional preferment of the parish of Santa Maria in the diocese of Trevigi.

We next find him occupied with the nuptials of his daughter Elena, whom he gave with a considerable dowry to Pietro Gradenigo; after which he proceeded to his diocese of Gubbio, where he remained till his desire of popularity, and his readiness to meet the demonstrations of affection he received from his people with corresponding hospitality, involved him in debt; and he was on the eve of falling into the most unpleasant embarrassments when Paul bestowed upon him the bishopric of Bergamo and recalled him to Rome. He remained there from this period till his death, preserving the entire favour of the Pope, and of by far the greater number of his colleagues in the sacred college. So high, indeed, was the repu-

tation he enjoyed, that he would probably have been raised to the Papacy had he lived long enough. But, according to his eulogists, he was as far from desiring this honour as he was from wishing to be elected a Cardinal, and he is reported to have told a friend that he would not accept the dignity should it ever be offered him.

His constitution had for some time before his death been greatly injured by continual attacks of the gout; and a blow he gave himself in passing a doorway bringing on a slow fever, his health grew daily worse till the 18th of January 1547, when he expired, leaving his son Torquato his heir, and two Cardinals, Farnese and another, the protectors of his literary remains.

Cardinal Bembo's reputation depends entirely upon the classical elegance of his taste, which without genius, or the higher attributes of mind, made him conspicuous among his contemporaries, and has handed his name down to posterity as that of one of the chief revivers of modern learning. His Latinity was considered purer than that of any preceding Italian scholar, and he has received the praise of being the first successful imitator of Cicero and other admired writers of the Augustan age. In his native language he was

one of the most successful of Petrarch's numerous followers; but the reader will not require to be told that when Bembo has received this the highest praise to which he could lay claim, his station must be very low among the great men with whom we are concerned. That he exercised considerable influence on the literary taste of the age there can be little doubt; but an imitator, however successful, or whatever be the object of his imitation, must never be ranked as the same species of intellectual being as he, who either by the inspiration of genius, or the exercise of a noble moral energy, has seen truth and beauty face to face himself, and not merely in the mirror of another's language. To those who have a right feeling of respect for the powers of the human mind, or wish well to the literature of a country, such men as Bembo will never appear worthy of great esteem. Virgil and Cicero, and the rest of the classics, cannot be too much studied or admired; but it is not by their lucid style or the musical concatenation of their phrases that they have held the hearts of generations in subjection; these were but the accidents of the power on which their glory depended—the calmness of the surface resulting from the depth of the stream. Their imitators, on the contrary,

were correct and elegant in language, because they made that the first and almost only object of their attention; and the evil was, that in proportion as they gained admirers, readers ceased to place the proper value on originality of thought, and writers to strive after any higher excellence or any nobler sphere of inquiry, than what had been already attained or explored. Hence the barrenness of the poetical literature of Italy during the succeeding age, and hence the decline of English poetry after the time of Pope. Bembo, and all such writers, while they soften and regulate a language, sacrifice what is divine to what is human, that is, thought and invention to style; and do the same as if they cut down an American forest to make way for a greenhouse, or dried a sea to a lake that it might be safe for a pleasure-barge.

The principal works of Bembo are, 1. The History of Venice, mentioned above, and which did not appear till four years after the death of the author. The style is elegant, but has been very justly found fault with for its close imitation of Cicero, and an affectation of classical phraseology, where it was manifestly improper for the subject, and inadequate to the sense it was intended to convey. Such instances as the following are cited

in support of this objection;—the word *Dea* employed for the Virgin Mary—*persuasio* for theological faith—the phrase *aqua et igni interdictio* for excommunication—and, respecting the election of the Pope, *Deorum immortalium beneficio.* He is also accused of being negligent in the chronology, putting the days of the month on which particular events took place but omitting the year. 2. His Treatises, or rather Dialogues, on the Vulgar Language; by which he obtained the credit of being one of the first writers, if not the first, who reduced Italian to grammatical rules. 3. Gli Asolani, already mentioned. 4. Le Rime. 5. Lettere. 6. Proposto a nome di Leone X. al Senato Viniziano. 7. Epistolarum Leonis X. P. M. nomine scriptarum Libri XVI. 8. Epistolarum Familiarum Libri VI. 9. De Guido Ubàldo Feretico, deque Elisabetha Gonzagia Urbini Ducibus Liber ad Nicolaum Theapolum. 10. De Virgilii Culice et Terentii Fabulis Liber ad Herculem Strozium. 11. De Ætna Liber ad Angelum Gabrielem. 12. De Imitatione. 13. Carmina. Besides these printed works he also left several which are still in manuscript, and will probably ever remain so. As far as subject is concerned, however, they would be much more interesting than most of those

of which I have given the titles; one is, Provincialium Poetarum Carmina, et Vitæ, a work which it appears he had many opportunities of rendering highly valuable, as he possessed several manuscripts and other materials for investigating the subject.*

* Mazzuchelli.

The Life of Vittoria Colonna.

Vittoria Colonna.

Few of the illustrious women, whose lives employ the pen of the biographer, have a greater claim to our regard than Vittoria Colonna. She neither startles us by pretensions unfitted to the gentleness and delicacy of her sex, nor loses the attractions of the most perfect feminine grace in our admiration of her talents as a writer. Her life is that of a woman of noble intellect, but her abilities appear in the developement of the affections and sentiments which properly belong to her nature; and notwithstanding the proverbial saying that genius is of no sex, we may fairly prove from her example, that as in its best and truest manifestation

it takes the form and substance of the heart, so when it exists naturally in woman, unmixed with affectation or an ambitious pretension to learning, it only speaks the language of feminine affections; the power it gives being chiefly precious to her because she is the better able to express the emotions which elevate her mind, and to give an enduring existence to names and objects which she would not have perish.

Vittoria Colonna was born in the castle of Marino, in the year 1490. Her father was Fabricio Colonna, Grand Constable of Naples, and her mother Anna di Montefeltro, daughter of the Duke of Urbino. The beauty of her person, and the many indications she gave of superior mental powers, were remarkable from her infancy; and she was scarcely four years old when her parents affianced her to the son of Don Alphonso d' Avalos, Marquis of Pescara, a child of the same age as herself. As her years increased, her beauty and genius became the objects of universal admiration, and her hand was sought in marriage by the Dukes of Savoy and Braganza. But the honour of her parents and her own affection for her affianced lover, prevented any breach of the original contract; and in their seventeenth year their marriage

was solemnized with all the splendour becoming the union of two of the noblest families in Italy.*

The desire of distinction which animated her husband, Ferdinando Francesco, separated them after a brief enjoyment of domestic happiness. Full of hope that the approaching contest between the King of France and the Venetians with their respective allies would furnish him with the opportunity of exercising his valour, he set out for the royal camp, and at his parting, with Vittoria received from her hands a superb pavilion and an embroidered standard bearing the inscription "Nunquam minus otiosus, quàm cum otiosus erat ille," originally said in reference to Vespasian. Besides these she presented him with some leaves of palm in token of her hope that he would return crowned with honour, and then bade him farewell, suffering herself to be consoled by the hope of seeing him serve his country in a manner becoming his name and character.

The first tidings she received from him encouraged her to believe that their most sanguine wishes would be fulfilled. He was chosen Captain-General of the Imperial cavalry, and thus placed in a situation in which his ability had full scope for

* Giam. Rota.

action; but a few months after their prospects were sadly changed. In the battle of Ravenna, while fighting at the head of his troops, he was taken prisoner and conveyed to Milan. He was, however, confined only a short time, during which he amused himself by composing a Dialogo d' Amore, addressed to his wife, and replete with lamentations at the hard fate which separated them. Vittoria made a device from the ideas contained in this composition, and inclosed a little Cupid in a circle formed by the figure of a serpent and bearing this line,

"Quem peperit virtus, prudentia servet amorem."

Francesco's deliverance from confinement did not enable him to return to his consort, who continued to occupy her time with literature, and the correspondence they had unceasingly kept up since his departure. In order, however, to have the opportunity of occasionally seeing him, Vittoria removed from Ischia to Naples, where she was joined by her husband whenever the duties of his high station in the army would allow of his absence. But these meetings were rare and brief, and her days were still employed in reading the best productions of ancient and modern times;

or in composing those poems which obtained her so great a reputation throughout Italy. The subject of her muse was almost always the actions of her husband; and Bullart observes, "that she sang his virtues in Tuscan verses so elevated and worthy of their subject, that she seemed to be a new Muse destined to publish the renown of that great Captain, and to inspire the praises due to warlike merit."

In the memorable battle of Pavia, which saw the heroic but unfortunate Francis I. fall into the hands of his enemies, the Marquis of Pescara reaped the chief honours of the day, and there was every reason to suppose that he would be immediately rewarded by the Emperor in a manner befitting the actions he had performed. But the envy of those about him was the chief consequence of his victory, and the opposite party conceiving hopes of forming a new league against the Emperor, thought that he was in a fit mood to be bribed to espouse their cause. Gieronimo Morone was the agent employed to sound his opinions on the subject; and were I writing the life of Francesco instead of Vittoria it would be worth while to repeat the ingenious arguments he employed on the occasion. The reward, however, held out to

the Marquis to engage his compliance, was the kingdom of Naples, which Morone asserted the Pope and the allies would without doubt confer upon him, besides which, it was added, he would obtain eternal honour by freeing afflicted Italy from the misfortunes she was then suffering, and thus secure to himself a wealthy kingdom, the command of a noble army, and an immortal name.*

Francesco, though of a high and honourable disposition, yielded to the practices of Morone and his party; but Vittoria was tremblingly alive to the reputation of her husband, and in a letter written to him at this period she expresses herself in the strongest manner on the subject. She represented to him that he had acquired a glory more illustrious than could be conferred by kingdoms or lofty titles—a glory won by honourable fidelity and noble virtue, and which would serve as a perpetual inheritance of praise to his descendants; that there is nothing so lofty in royalty which may not be easily surpassed by the loftiness of a perfect virtue, and that she therefore desired to be the wife not of a king but of a captain who was not only mighty by his arm in war but who even in peace, by the great honour

* Paolo Giovio.

of his just and invincible mind, knew how to conquer the greatest kings.

Neither the exhortations however of Vittoria, nor his own sense of right, prevailed upon the Marquis to resist the temptations with which he was assailed; but the wounds he had received in battle and his imprudent excess in drinking water while suffering extreme heat and fatigue, had made such ravages on his frame that he found it necessary to warn his wife of his dangerous condition. On receiving this alarming intelligence she immediately set out for Milan, and as she passed through Rome was entertained there with the most honourable distinctions; but, continuing her journey as rapidly as possible, she had only reached Viterbo when she was met by a messenger bearing the intelligence that her husband had breathed his last.

Francesco with his dying lips had recommended Vittoria to the protection of his cousin and the inheritor of his estates, the Marquis del Vasto; but her grief at first admitted of no consolation, and she fell into a profound melancholy, which for a short time deprived her of the use of reason. Her despondency, however, at length gave way to a milder sorrow, and she found in her favourite

studies a relief to afflictions which would have wholly overwhelmed a mind less fruitful in sources of consolation. Many who knew her conceived it unfit that so beautiful a woman, only thirty-five years of age, should pass the remainder of her life in retirement; and her brothers, it is said, strongly persuaded her to marry one of the many princes who endeavoured to obtain her hand. But to all their arguments she uniformly replied, that though her husband might seem dead to others, he was still living and always present to her. Her poems breathe the same sentiments—every thought which passed through her mind seems either to have sprung from the remembrance of her husband, or the instant it rose on her mind to have become connected with it; her verses were thus rendered so true to natural feeling, that it has been observed by more than one Italian writer, she carried away the palm from all her contemporaries in the expression of the affections.

For seven years she thus struggled with her sorrow, finding a greater source of comfort in honouring the memory of her husband than in any other employment; but her affliction still pressed too heavily to be either removed or considerably diminished by her present endeavours. Religion

alone offered her the means of lightening her distress without disturbing the sacred objects she had enshrined in her memory. She might have mixed in the world, and its amusements might have distracted her thoughts from the painful feelings which oppressed her; but her fidelity to her husband's name forbade her doing any thing which should render him less present to her mind, and she preferred enduring the heaviest griefs to softening them by means which might interfere with her resolution of being as faithful to him when dead as while living. But in the offices of religion she found, at the same time, a support to her afflicted mind, and indications of a futurity which authorized the feelings that had hitherto been only like the dreamings of fancy; giving, therefore, a freer flight to her Muse, she now began to write on subjects connected with divine truths, and composed a great variety of canzone and sonnets, to which she gave the title of "Rime Spirituali."

In the spring of 1537 she made a journey to Lucca, and from thence to Ferrara, with the intention of spending some time there. While residing in the latter city she is said to have formed a design of travelling to Jerusalem, and would certainly have put it in execution but for the

Marquis del Vasto, who prudently forbade her exposing herself to such an enterprise. As some compensation, however, for her disappointment in this respect, she proceeded to Rome, where she arrived about the month of April 1538. The reputation she had acquired by her writings and the nobleness of her character, made her an object of still greater reverence than she was on her former visit, when she entered the city as the wife of the most celebrated captain of Italy. Among the many distinguished men who sought to express their veneration for her talents and exalted character were Cardinal Pole and Cardinal Contarini, between whom and Vittoria there existed a constant friendship and correspondence till it was terminated by death. Bembo was also another of the personages who paid her similar respect, and it is said that it was in some degree to her influence with the Pontiff that he owed his elevation to the purple. Of the respect, indeed, with which her opinions were regarded at the Papal Court a curious proof is to be found in a letter from Molza to his son, in which, speaking of some business which required great interest, he says, that their success would greatly depend upon her expected visit to Rome; that he knew of no person who could

render them greater assistance, and that by her authority and good-will she would probably be able to effect more than the letters of either the Pope or the Cardinals.* It is also certain that she was the munificent friend of many learned men in distress, whose necessities she relieved either by her purse or the exercise of her powerful interest.

As she advanced in years she became more and more desirous of escaping entirely from the world, and in March 1541 she finally resolved on assuming the religious habit. In conformity with this determination she entered the monastery Di Suore, in Orvietto, where, however, she remained only a few months, but took up her settled abode in that of Saint Catherine in Viterbo. Little, it appears, is known respecting her from this period, and we are not to be surprised that the life of a female immured within the walls of a convent should present few circumstances requiring record. It is, however, well attested that, though retired from the world, her charity lost nothing of its activity, and that none of her sisters surpassed her in the purity or fervour of their devotion. In August 1542 she was still

* Giam. Rota.

resident in the same monastery, as is proved by a letter of that date;* but at the beginning of 1547 she had returned to Rome, and was living in the Palazzo Cesarini, where she was seized with a mortal malady, and died at the end of February in the year above mentioned.

Few writers have received greater eulogiums than Vittoria Colonna. Nearly nine closely printed pages of Rota's edition are taken up with quotations from the testimonies of learned men in her favour. In the first impression of her poems, published at Parma in 1538, the epithet Divina is applied to her name, and in that which appeared at Venice, about two years after, the term Diva. Crescembini, in speaking of her writings, says, that "the barbarity of the previous age had received no greater blow than that which was given it by this valorous lady, in whom not only the Muses but the Sciences seemed to have taken up their abode, as if Heaven had placed its choicest treasures where they would be most safely preserved." Another author, Giammateo Toscano, says that she was second to no poet but Petrarch; and Francesco Agostino, that there is not an Italian writer of that age, whether in prose or verse, who

* Giam. Rota.

has not celebrated and commended her above all others of her sex; while to the testimony of these critics may be added the far more valuable one of Ariosto, who has more than once mentioned her in his poems as the glory of Italy and of her sex.

Some allowance must be made in these remarks for the hyperboles in which the writers of former days were fond of indulging. Vittoria Colonna was doubtless a woman of considerable genius, and of a character which added the lustre of virtue, to that of a noble intellect. But her writings, though possessing many graces blended with the powerful feelings of sorrow that for the greater part of her life oppressed her spirit, must have been much more various both in style and invention to preserve her in the high rank to which her contemporaries raised her. Few poems, however, dedicated to the praise of an individual, are equal to those which this admirable woman wrote in honour of her husband's actions and memory, and there are equally few which with so much piety of thought combine so much genuine poetic feeling.

The Life of Pietro Aretino.

Pietro Aretino.

This celebrated satirist, more feared in his time than either kings or conquerors, obtained from his contemporaries the epithet of the Divine, from the celebrity, or perhaps the licentious freedom of some of his compositions, and of the Scourge of Princes from the severity of others. His proper name he owed to the place of his birth, and that he ever acquired even the elements of learning appears to have been a matter of chance, and was entirely the fruit of his quick and precocious intellect. He was born at Arezzo, on the night of the 19th or 20th of April 1492, or as his Italian biographers express it, in the

night between those days. His father was a gentleman of the city, named Luigi Bacci, and all that is known of his mother is, that her name was Tita, and that Pietro was the consequence of an illicit connexion.

The first years of his life were passed at Arezzo, and it has been asserted by some of his eulogists that he received instruction in the liberal arts from the most learned men of the age; but this opinion has been controverted by all his most respectable biographers, who contend that though early manifesting that acute and penetrating understanding which raised him to eminence, he had no masters to assist him in his studies. That he knew nothing of Greek or Latin at that period is proved by several passages in his letters, but the wants of a learned education were more than supplied by the diligence with which he studied the best works that existed in his own language, making the poets, of which Italy could then boast a splendid company, his particular delight.

At an age when boys are usually occupied with only preparing to think, the untaught Aretino began to compose verses which indicated both the originality and fearlessness of his genius. Among his first attempts at versification, is said to have

been a sonnet full of bitter sarcasms against indulgences, and his departure from Arezzo while still a mere boy, is to be attributed to the punishment which he had reason to dread would be the consequence of this temerity.

Whatever was the cause of his early travels, it is well established that he left his native place when very young, and proceeded to Perugia, where he learnt to bind books, and worked at that business several years. While exercising his trade as a book-binder, he acquired additional stores of knowledge, and fed his love of reading by perusing nearly all the works he had to bind. It is not unlikely that it was the hope of enjoying these opportunities of seeing many books, that induced him to follow the employment of a binder; and we may, with equal probability, attribute to the gratification of his wishes in this respect, the pleasure with which he always alludes in his letters to his sojourn at Perugia. It was there, he says, he grew up and increased in power, calling it his own country, and the garden of his youth. Nor does it seem that the danger which is supposed to have driven him from Arezzo, had any effect in restraining him from similar sallies in his new place of residence. One anecdote related of him will be sufficient to

show what his feelings still were respecting the superstitions of his countrymen; but as there was no proof of extraordinary wit or judgment in what he did in this instance, it can only be regarded as an act of petulant levity. There was exposed on the walls of one of the churches in the town a picture of the Virgin Mary kneeling at the feet of Christ, with her arms extended in adoration. Aretino contemplated it in the midst of an adoring multitude, but as soon as the streets were clear he returned, and secretly delineated a lute between the extended arms of the Virgin.

Notwithstanding the attractions of Perugia, and the advantages he enjoyed through the attention of several learned men whose notice he had won by different literary essays, he made such slow advances in improving his means of support, that he found it necessary to seek some other field for the exercise of his talents. Rome offered the greatest temptation to his adventurous disposition, and he set out for that city, being obliged by his poverty to make the journey on foot, and carrying nothing from Perugia but the clothes on his back. It is not known how he proposed to better his fortune in Rome, but it is probable that he carried recommendations with

him from the acquaintances he had lately formed, as soon after his arrival in the capital he became attached to the house of a wealthy and powerful merchant, Agostini Chigii. The nature of the situation which he held is also as little known as what his intentions were on leaving Perugia; but it is seldom that a man like Aretino remains long without finding a master, or that the latter, having once discovered the character of his servant, is doubtful how to employ him. Whatever was the occupation in which he was engaged, he so far satisfied his employer as to remain a considerable time in his service, and by his means was made acquainted with several personages about the Pontifical Court.

It was doubtless to the circumstance last mentioned that he owed the materials of many of his satires. The Pontificate of Leo the Tenth was made a brilliant era for Italian learning and philosophy by the taste and patronage of that celebrated Pontiff; but it is well known how grossly he suffered the simplicity of religion to be corrupted, to supply the means of patronizing learning and the arts. Christendom has never been perhaps in a worse condition, than during the period he presided over the then Catholic Church. On

one side were nearly all the distinguished literary men of the age, devoted to the elucidation of purely philosophical systems, wholly taken up with admiration of Platonism, and resting not only their chances of reputation, but their hopes of doing good on the propagation of classical learning; on the other side was the great mass of the people, still far from being in a condition to profit by the sciences then in vogue, and regarded by the higher ranks of their spiritual guides much in the same manner as the haughtiest philosophers of old considered the multitude. The populace of Italy, and of every country in Christendom, would therefore have been left to follow its own mood, and make a religion for itself, had they not been profitable tributaries, and on that account to be kept in faithful subjection. How this was to be effected, it was not difficult for the weakest politician to discover. Ages had naturalized superstition in the hearts of men, and when this is the case, they may be governed by means from which a mere child, nourished with truth, would free himself with a smile of contempt. Nothing had yet occurred of any moment in Italy to make its sacred politicians suppose any change in their plans requisite, and a necessity for taxing the people's credulity was no sooner apparent, than

they invented methods for the immediate exercise of their power. Hence the gross and wicked impostures of indulgences and the purchase of masses —and hence the darkness which overspread the Christian world, while learning and the arts in one or two favoured corners were protected and cultivated with the most distinguished success.

But it was not of ambition only, or of subjecting the people to superstitions which might be made a profitable source of revenue, that the Pontiff and his courtiers had to be accused. The lives they spent were a contradiction to all their professions of Apostolic humility; and though the natural elevation of Leo's mind prevented his degenerating into a vulgar sensualist, there were many among the highest of the clergy whose conduct was marked by a degrading profligacy, not the less disgusting to those who had opportunities of discovering it, because it was hidden from the world at large.

It was in the houses of these men that Aretino now passed much of his time. He had already been witness to the base ignorance of the people in the country; he had shown his contempt of their superstition by every means in his power, and it was not likely that his opinions would undergo much alteration from the discoveries he had at present

the opportunity of making. If the lessons of priests and monks appeared worthy of ridicule when he only saw the superstitions they propagated among the vulgar, they could hardly fail of being doubly so when he found that the powerful regarded them as nothing better than instruments of gain. He might have been a satirist—a daring and licentious one—had he been placed in other circumstances; but certainly none could have been fitter than those in which he now found himself, to throw into a ferment the bitter gall which seems to have been mixed with his blood from his very infancy. It appears, however, that he was as well qualified to play the part of a courtier himself, as to expose and lash the vices of his colleagues. We hear nothing of his incurring the reprehension of the princes and nobles of the Church, till the circumstance occurred which occasioned his retirement from Rome; and it is probable, therefore, that during the six or seven years he spent there, he chiefly exercised his favourite talent in secret, feeding his splenetic disposition with a careful observation of popular men, and only shooting his arrows at the instigation of his patrons, and that rarely and with caution.

But his politic disposition was not always proof

against temptation. It happened that some profligate persons at Rome had induced the celebrated painter Giulio Romano to degrade his genius to the level of their base and corrupt taste. The productions of his pencil, guided by the will of such patrons, were not only unworthy of the artist, but deserving the strongest reprehension, on account of their licentious character; they were, however, engraved by Marc Antonio of Bologna, and their circulation necessarily attracted the attention of the public authorities. Both the painter and engraver were accordingly in danger of punishment for their violations of public decency: the former fled in time to secure his escape; but the latter was apprehended, and thrown into close confinement. The punishment which awaited him was severe, but he had the good luck to be acquainted with Aretino; and so much influence had the latter gained since his residence in the capital, that he was enabled by his exertions to deliver the terrified engraver from his dangerous predicament. It would have been well for the satirist if he could have contented himself with this share in the business; but, as if tempted by the perils in which his friends had been placed, he was unable to rest till he had written sixteen sonnets, which he appended

to the offensive paintings, and which they far exceeded, if possible, in disgusting ribaldry.

Like most persons in his situation, he had many personal enemies, and a very short time elapsed before it was well known to the Pontiff who had written the licentious poems in illustration of Giulio Romano's pictures. Aretino, well aware of what he was to expect from the discovery, prepared immediately for his retreat, which he accomplished in safety, and returned to Arezzo. This event took place in the year 1524, and he seems to have been rendered as destitute as ever by the folly which forced him to leave the Pontifical Court so precipitously.

He continued but a short time in his native town, being invited, soon after his return, to visit Florence and the court of Giovanni de' Medici, who, with princely power, was directing the affairs of that Republic. Aretino speedily ingratiated himself in the affections of his new patron, who, just before his arrival at Florence, had broken his league with the Emperor, and entered into alliance with Francis the First, King of France. In consequence of this association, Giovanni proceeded to Milan, where Francis then was, with his army, and, having taken Aretino with him, the

poet had full scope for exercising his court-like ingenuity. So prosperously did he pursue the advantage thus afforded him, that he not only acquired additional influence with his protector, but won the favour of the French monarch, and advanced every day in the career which his enterprising mind had marked out.

It is not precisely known to what cause he owed his reconciliation with the Pope; but shortly after returning from Milan, he made a journey to Rome, where he remained some time, but again left it on account of a quarrel with Clement, supposed to have originated in the latter's neglecting to punish a person who, according to Aretino's own account, had attempted to assassinate him, prompted to the deed by the desire of revenging an insult which the satirist had passed upon him in a sonnet.

The court of Giovanni again attracted his steps. During his absence, he had received letters from that Prince expressive of continued regard; and in one of them the latter tells him that, having been at Pavia on a visit to the King of France, he was asked by the Monarch why he had not brought Aretino, whom he always desired to see, and directed to be invited by a special message

to Pavia. So agreeable, indeed, were his manners and conversation to Giovanni, that he would now go nowhere without him, but made him his companion both in his retirement and in transacting the affairs of the Republic.

But the hopes of Aretino were not suffered to remain long in this prosperous posture, Giovanni having received in battle a dangerous wound in the thigh, which rendered it necessary to remove him to the palace of the Duke of Mantua. While he lay there, Aretino was his constant companion, and sought, by every means in his power, to alleviate the sufferings of his generous benefactor; but neither the attentions of friendship, nor the skill of physicians, could stop the effects of the wound, and the limb was at length amputated. Whether owing to the weakness of his frame, or the inexperience of the operators, Giovanni was unable to support the trial, and, soon after the operation, expired in the arms of Aretino.

Once more left without a patron, our poet resolved that he would thenceforward live independent, trusting to his wit for the means of support, and maintaining himself, as he expresses it, by the sweat of his brow. Venice was the place he chose for his abode, and thither he proceeded on

the 25th of March 1527. Many reasons may be alleged to account for his choosing the magnificent capital of the commercial world for his residence. He was to live by the exercise of his talents, and in Venice he might find not one patron, but a thousand, and be enriched by their rewards, and this without feeling dependent on any. At Venice lived the great Titian, and many men eminent for their wit and learning, who would know how to appreciate his abilities, and quicken them by rivalry and competition, things, above all others, desirable to turbulent intellects like his. At Venice, pleasure had no restraint, and wantoned at will over the blue waves of the Adriatic, or through the splendid halls of gorgeous palaces. And at Venice, lastly, he could express himself as freely as he chose on matters of religion, without the fear of either the Pope, or his courtiers, or any other ecclesiastic — it being a circumstance generally known, that this Republic preserved its independence of Rome throughout the many ages that it flourished; that it despised all attempts made upon its independence, either by open or sinister means; and that its inhabitants, though always professing themselves good Catholics, cared almost as little about the Sovereign Pontiff, when the interests of

the State were at stake, as the Turks at Constantinople. The taste and temper of Aretino well fitted him for living among a people thus situated; and it is, therefore, not surprising to find him calling Venice, some time after his removal thither, "the paradise of the world." To add, moreover, to the general attractions of the place, he enjoyed the friendship of the Doge, Andrea Gritti, and lived on terms of close intimacy with other powerful and distinguished members of the Government.

The dislike he had conceived for Clement VII. on account of the circumstances which had twice driven him from Rome, had never been concealed; and now that he was in Venice he expressed himself more freely than ever respecting the Pontiff's character. His conversation and writings produced a considerable sensation: the enemies of Clement did not fail to make the utmost use of his philippics; and it is said, that the exertions of Aretino tended materially to bring on the siege of Rome, and the captivity of the Pope in the Castle of St. Angelo. Andrea Gritti at length admonished him to be less free in the employment of his invectives; but he is supposed to have continued to pour out his virulence against Clement

for two years longer, when, owing either to a change in his opinions, or, which is by far the most likely, to the persuasions of the Doge and the hope of private advantage, he confessed himself to have been guilty of a great error in respect to the Pope, and wrote to him, expressing his penitence, and his desire to be reconciled to his Holiness.

Nothing can better show the influence which Aretino had acquired, and the dread attached to his name, than the ready manner in which the offended and even insulted Pontiff accepted his return to allegiance. Through the medium of his friend Vasone, Suffragan Bishop of Vicenza, he received a pontifical brief, to which he replied by another penitential letter; and about the same time he became reconciled with his other adversaries at Rome, among whom was the Bishop of Verona, Giammatteo Giberti; but this prelate soon after offended him again, and was once more the object of his satires. It is to this period also we must refer the offer he received from the Emperor Charles V. to create him a Cavalier, but which he rejected, answering the Emperor, that a Cavalier without a fortune, was like a wall without a cross, exposed to every one who chose to insult him.

The Cardinal of Ravenna, however, soon after bestowed upon him a much more important advantage, in the shape of five hundred scudi, as a marriage portion for his sister. But of this relative of the poet little is known, except that she did him no credit by her conduct, either before or after her marriage, as, in a letter to his benefactor, the Cardinal, he says, that of all the benefits he had conferred upon him, that had done him the least good which related to his sister. He had also another sister, of similar character; but it is suspected, and with apparent justice, that much which has been said respecting them ought to be attributed to the invention of his enemies.

But, notwithstanding the attentions and patronage which he appears to have enjoyed in no slight degree during his residence at Venice, he became, from some cause or other, so discontented with his situation, that he declared his resolution to leave Italy for ever, and take up his residence at Constantinople. The reasons he alleged for this determination were, that the son of Andrea Gritti, then settled in the capital of the east, had invited him thither, and that he was so poor that he was obliged to accept the invitation from necessity. Neither of these causes, however, is allowed to

have been the true one, the publication of his intention to leave Italy having originated, it is said, in the expectation that it would make his friends more anxious to retain him, and reward his talents with greater munificence. Whatever truth there may be in this supposition, it is certain that he never undertook his proposed journey, but, in 1534, visited Rome, then under the government of Pope Paul III., to recreate himself, as he says in one of his epistles, with the pleasures of the capital. His stay there was but short, and he returned to his favourite Venice, where he seems to have profited to the utmost by the subterfuge he had employed, or rather by the exercise of his wit, which, notwithstanding his former complaints, appears never to have wanted a ready market.

It is supposed that about this time his income was rendered very considerable by pensions, and the sale of his works, which were rapidly circulated immediately on their appearance. So much were they esteemed by many persons, that a Spanish prince was accustomed to send a courier to Rome, for the sole purpose of procuring Aretino's publications the instant they came from the press. Nor were these the only instances of regard he received from the nobles and the public in general. He was visited

by the greatest princes, and by every description of persons who made any pretension to fashion or literature. Among the former was the Marquis of Montferrat, who both came to see him at Venice and invited him to his palace. While mentioning this circumstance to a friend in one of his epistles, he takes the opportunity of informing him at the same time of the prodigious popularity he enjoyed; and it is not a little amusing to hear how the book-binder of Perugia, who made his journey to Rome on foot, and with no other wealth than the clothes on his back, could describe his present prosperity and importance. "My head is broken," says he, in his usual style, "with the incessant visits of lords, and my steps are worn away with their continual treading on them, as the pavement of the Capitol was worn by the wheels of triumphant chariots. Nor do I believe, by the way, that Rome ever saw such a concourse of people of all ages, as that which besieges my house; Turks, Jews, Indians, French, Germans, and Spaniards, are always seeking me, and you may imagine how it is with our Italians. Of the inferior kind of people I say nothing, since it is easier to draw you from your devotion to the Emperor, than to see me a moment without soldiers, scholars, friars, or priests: I seem, indeed, to have become a very oracle of

truth, some one or other coming continually to tell me of the faults committed by this or that prince or prelate, by which means I am made, as it were, the secretary of the world at large, and I beg you will address me as such."

That Aretino allowed himself the full latitude of his vanity and love of ridicule in this epistle, there is not much room to doubt, but it is equally certain, as Mazzuchelli properly observes,* that he really possessed a very extraordinary reputation, which was rendered the more remarkable from the circumstance that he owed the cultivation of his mind entirely, or principally so, to his own industry and perseverance. Of the intellectual dominion he had created for himself, there are ample proofs in the attention he received from the sovereigns of France and Germany. For many years he remained the willing adulator of both, and exercised his art as a courtier with such perfection, that, though no two masters could have been more difficult to serve at the same time, he succeeded in avoiding a breach with either. The power of his pen was such, that while each desired to obtain his influence, neither dared provoke his virulence by expressing dissatisfaction at his failure in entire devotion. Francis could claim his regard on the

* Vita.

strength of his alliance with Giovanni, and on the early respect which he showed for his genius; the Emperor, on the other hand, rested his claims on the substantial foundation of a pension of two hundred scudi, which he authorized the satirist to draw from the state of Milan. At length, the latter determined to secure the whole of Aretino's favour by some greater exercise of imperial liberality, and for this purpose directed the Duke of Montmorenci to call on him, and make known his intentions. The Duke did so, and in the presence of one or two other noblemen told the poet, that if he would promise to speak and write of the Emperor his master only as he did of the King of France, and without prejudice to truth, he would secure to him the yearly payment of four hundred scudi for life. Such an offer was not to be treated with disdain, and Aretino assured the Duke that he should rejoice to do honour to the name of the Emperor, that is, without prejudice to truth, and would begin to show his zeal in the cause the instant he found himself certain of receiving the promised pension. It is not known whether Francis offered a still higher price for his assistance, or whether the neglect of the Emperor's agents nullified the contract mentioned above, but Aretino remained faithful to

his old patron Francis, and wrote of him in a manner which plainly showed that he was strongly inclined to his interest.

It has been observed, that nothing could be more surprising than the sight of these powerful princes, and others only second to them in rank, thus humbling themselves to a man like Aretino, whose wit, according to the most respectable testimony, was far inferior to his arrogance.* Golden ornaments and presents of every description were poured in upon him from all quarters, in addition to the wealth he acquired from the sources already mentioned; so that, according to his own words, he had received, in the course of about eighteen years, not less than twenty-five thousand scudi from the different patrons of his muse. That he acquired this large sum chiefly from the terror which he had taught men to feel at the naming of his satires, is beyond a doubt; but it is not less certain, that he was also greatly assisted in his projects by the suppleness of his principles, and his readiness to flatter any one in power who had not deeply offended him. Thus, on the one side, he employed the threats of the satirist; on the other, the arts of the parasite; either of which has not been unfrequently found sufficient

* Tiraboschi.

for the purpose of a fortune-hunter, but which united in the same hand are next to omnipotent. "As the professed Flagello de' Principi," says the learned historian of Italian literature, "he seemed to threaten them with his vengeance, and the reproach of their actions in his books; but there was never a more sordid flatterer of the great, and there is not to be found in all his works a single word against any sovereign. The praises, therefore," continues his severe critic, "which he received from learned men; the honour paid him by some academies, who enrolled him among their members; the works dedicated to him by several persons, all which things are fully detailed by the Count Mazzuchelli, show us to what a height of folly a fanatic adulation may carry people; some from the desire of gaining from him the same praises which they gave; and others, from a base fear of being pointed at in his satires."

We may mention in this place, that there were not wanting persons among his contemporaries who considered that he was greatly assisted in his compositions, while at Venice, by Niccolò Franco, a scholar of eminence, and who passed a considerable time in the house of Aretino, purchasing his protection and pecuniary aid, it would seem, by com-

municating the advantages he possessed in an extensive acquaintance with the writers of Greece and Rome. Some of the works of Aretino bear evident marks of greater erudition than he is believed to have ever possessed himself: and Niccolò, when he separated from him on account of a violent quarrel, asserted, that many of Aretino's works were the produce of his intellect. The satirist, however, as might be supposed, strenuously denied the truth of this accusation, saying that the contrary was altogether the case; and in this assertion he was supported by Dolce and others of his friends, who affirmed that Franco was utterly incapable of aiding such a man in his studies, and that he was an ignorant and foolish boaster.

Whatever truth or falsehood there might be in the accusation of his enemies, he continued to increase in reputation and influence; and when Charles V. made his public visit to Venice, Guidubaldo, Duke of Urbino, one of the four Ambassadors chosen by Venice to represent the Republic, took Aretino with him when he set out to meet the Emperor. Notwithstanding the doubtful manner in which he had acted, he was received by the Sovereign with the most marked distinction, as he has described*

* Lettere, vol. iii. 37.

in a letter to his friend, Signor Montese: "I am almost out of my senses," says he, "so delighted have I been with seeing and hearing him; nor do I think it possible for any one who has not seen and heard him to imagine the so unimaginable sense of that humane familiarity, of that pious grace, by virtue of which he subjects the power of fortune to the will of that intrepid soul of valour, which continually fires his breast with some Christian resolution. Truly ought I to regard as correct that which Francesco Maria, of eternal memory, was accustomed to say to me with the skilfulness of his speech, wonderful because unpremeditated;—when I regarded him above human form and likeness, and declared the injury which had been done him by unskilful sculptors, he said, 'I am by nature not handsome, and am, therefore, obliged to those who represent me with something almost brutish in my appearance; since it thence happens that when I am seen by persons, I seem much less repulsive than they had expected to find me.' . . . . I alluded to a picture of his late wife, Isabella, now the servant of God, which Busseto gave to Titian, and he immediately made several inquiries, with great solicitude, respecting that divine painter, saying, that the picture was

very like truth, although done slightly: and, pursuing the mention of his angelic wife, he swore to me, that he had only found comfort at her death from the perusal of my letter; and this he said with his eyes overflowing with tears, so deeply fixed in his heart was the remembrance of his consort. I replied, that I could not think my letters were read by him who held in his hand the sceptre of the world. He answered, that all the nobles of Spain had copies of what I had written in the retreat from Algiers."

On the accession of Julius III. to the Papacy, Aretino again determined to seek his fortune among the Princes of the Church. To this end he composed some sacred poems and paraphrases of Psalms, and also wrote to his Holiness, congratulating him on his promotion, and eulogizing his various virtues: besides which, he composed a sonnet on the same subject, and considered himself as having done sufficient altogether to merit being rewarded by a rich benefice. The Pontiff, indeed, expressed himself highly gratified by the demonstration of his attachment; and Baldovino del Monte, the friend of Aretino, and a relative of Julius, obtained for him the gift of a thousand crowns of gold, and a bull, creating him a Cavalier

of the order of Saint Peter, a distinction, it seems, much more honourable than profitable. These grants were by no means sufficient to satisfy Aretino's wishes; but he received them with pleasure and gratitude, as indications that he should shortly obtain other and more important ones: he even expected to be made a Cardinal, and scarcely any object was too great, or placed too high, to prevent him from grasping at it. To aid him also in his schemes of ambition, the Duke of Urbino invited him about this time to accompany him to Rome, and as nothing could be better adapted to his wishes than to appear before the Pontiff as a friend of the Prince to whom was committed the command of the Papal troops, the invitation was gladly accepted, and Aretino prepared for his departure. It is amusing to find him saying to a friend, that it was expected his presence at Rome would make another jubilee, so great he thought would be the concourse of people desirous of seeing his person. The reception given him by the Pope was equal to his warmest expectation; but it was otherwise with regard to rewards and pensions. Julius embraced him, and kissed his forehead, "but his hands," says Aretino, "remained empty:" and, after paying court for some months, without see-

ing any reason to hope that his farther stay would be better rewarded, he returned dissatisfied to Venice, where it is supposed he remained without ever again changing his residence.

The disappointment he felt at what he esteemed the unpardonable neglect of the Pontiff, greatly enraged him, and he told a friend that, unless he found things different, "he would put his pen into the whole great legendary of the saints;" adding, "and, as soon as I have composed my book, I swear to you, that I will dedicate it to Sultan Soliman." It may not be uninteresting to the reader to see the sonnet on which he lay a great part of his claim to the regard of Julius:—

Ecco pur che in più pro nostro ha Dio converso
In Giulio Terzo il gran Giulio Secondo,
E siccome quel fur stupor del mondo
Miracol questo fia dell' universo.
Egli è di grazie omnipotenti asperso,
E di virtuti angeliche fecondo;
Nel senno, e nel valor tanto profondo,
Che la fama il decanta in simil verso.
Forza d'armi, di leggi, e di eloquenza,
Non userà il Pastor, benchè sia tale
In natura, in arbitrio, ed in potenza;
Ma sederà sopra il suo tribunale
La Giustizia, la Pace, e la Clemenza,
Si che giubili il Ben, languisca il Male.

Lo! the great Second Julius, for our bliss,
Now as the Third great Julius is known—
That for the wonder of the world, but this
The miracle of the universe we own!
Graces omnipotent his form surround,
Bright virtues, too, angelical and rare—
In sense and noble valour so profound,
That even his fame his graces seem to share.
Though such he be in nature, state, and might,
The force of arms that Pastor will not use,
Nor laws, nor eloquence, but rather choose
To place on his tribunal holy right,
And peace, and mercy, whence we soon shall see
Evil decay, and good keep jubilee!

It is greatly doubted whether he really received, as he subsequently boasted, the offer of a Cardinal's hat: but the extraordinary marks of respect which he obtained from so many princes render it not improbable that the Pontiff was willing, by any means in his power, to retain him in his service, and the promise of promotion to the purple was an expedient used in many cases besides that of Aretino. He was, however, pressed by no necessity to court so uncertain a patron as Julius; the Emperor and the rest of his princely acquaintances having supplied him with an income sufficient to support not only the ordinary expenses of

his establishment, but to live in a style of courtly magnificence. His table was always furnished with the rarest and most costly viands; the wines he drank were superior in excellence to those found in almost any other house; and he dressed in vestments so rich and fashionable, that he was said to have the noblest and most graceful appearance of any old man in Italy. The sums he spent by this expensive manner of living, afford the strongest proof that could be given of the influence which he possessed over the minds of the great. In ten years, that is from 1527 to 1537, his living cost him no less than ten thousand scudi, and this, without reckoning, he observes, the sums he paid for the silks and the cloth of gold he purchased for his dress. Nor were his expenses confined to the gratification of his own wants. His liberality to those who needed it seems to have been as free as that which he desired to see exercised towards himself by the great men whom he flattered in his epistles and dedications. Besides keeping a table at all times prepared for the hospitable entertainment of his friends, his house was the general resort of all the disappointed and unfortunate men of the city. "Every one runs to me," says he, in a letter to a friend, "as if I had a royal treasure at

my command. If a poor woman is in her labour, my house pays for it—if any one is thrown into prison, I must provide for him—sick soldiers, unfortunate pilgrims, wandering cavaliers—everybody comes to me, and every one who happens to be ill sends to my apothecary for physic, which I accordingly have to pay for."

But he had also calls upon his purse of a different kind. His illicit connections had brought upon him the care of a family; and, in the decline of life, he found himself obliged to provide for the support and establishment of three daughters: of these, the eldest married a gentleman named Perina Riccia, and Aretino employed his interest with his friends so well on the occasion, that they supplied him, by their benefactions, with the marriage portion. The Duke of Florence gave three hundred scudi towards it, and the Cardinal of Ravenna, who had behaved so liberally at the marriage of his sister, brought him two hundred, a part of a larger benefaction promised by the Emperor; others contributed smaller sums, and altogether the daughter of the satirist was as richly dowered as if her father had been a merchant instead of a man living solely by his wit. The marriage took place in 1659, and the following

year the bride and her husband were invited by the Duke and Duchess of Urbino to visit them at their palace; but quarrels shortly after occurred which destroyed the hopes Aretino had indulged of seeing his daughter happy; and he had the mortification to find himself involved in disputes which ended in her separation from her husband. His favourite child, Adria, died in her youth; but so strong was his affection for her, that he had a medal cast to preserve her memory, and never ceased to speak of her with deep emotion.

In speaking of the affection he bore his children, we are also reminded of the warm attachment he uniformly manifested towards his intimate acquaintances: his fondness for the pleasures of the table not being in the smallest degree tinctured with the illiberality which sometimes affects men in his circumstances. The gratification he derived from delicious wines and viands, was always enjoyed at his own expense, as he never left home to dine with any one, while it was his greatest delight to get together such men as Titian and other celebrated artists and literary men to spend the evening in partaking of his dainties. Towards Titian he exercised his friendly feelings in a more substantial manner, introducing the great artist to

the Emperor, and aiding his fame in a most important degree, by the publicity he gave his works through frequent allusion to them in his letters and conversation. There is little doubt but that his sincere regard for him as a man induced him thus to promote his interests; but he had great taste for works of art, and Titian was a painter with whose works few persons could become acquainted without venerating the artist. One of the most interesting of Aretino's letters is that addressed to the painter to thank him for a copy of his celebrated Jesus, the original of which was sent to the Emperor. "I have received this morning, that of the Nativity," says Aretino, "a copy of that true and living Jesus you gave the Emperor, and which was the most precious gift that ever monarch received from his most devoted subject. The crown of thorns which transfixes Christ, is indeed of thorns, and the blood which is seen flowing from the wounds, is indeed blood; in the same way, no scourge could make the flesh seem more inflamed or livid than your divine pencil has done on all the heavenly members of the sacred image. The grief which appears impressed on the figure of Jesus, moves to repentance whoever beholds it with a Christian feeling; the sight of his arms cut with the

cords by which his hands are bound, must teach humility to whoever contemplates the position of his right hand so expressive of the deepest sorrow; nor dares any who sees the pacific grace demonstrated in that form, retain the slightest feeling of hate or rancour in his bosom. The place where I sleep, therefore, has no longer the appearance of a noble, earthly chamber, but seems to be a sacred temple of God, so that I am about to convert pleasure into prayer, and licentiousness into purity, thanking you greatly for this specimen of your art." Dated Venice, January 1548.

His intimate acquaintance with Titian brought him on one occasion into a ludicrously perilous situation. Having taken part with his friend against Tintoret, he ventured to satirize the latter with more freedom than was consistent either with justice or safety; the artist, however, said nothing, but invited him to sit for his portrait, which he expressed himself anxious to paint. Aretino went accordingly without any suspicion to his house, but after sitting some time, Tintoret desired him to let him see his height, and then began to measure him, the terrified Aretino exclaiming, "Jacopo, what are you doing?" "Nothing particular," he said; "but I see you measure two pistols and a half

long." These mysterious words led to an apology, and they were thenceforward good friends.

It was not on all occasions that he escaped so well. His love of ridicule, and the bitterness with which he resented neglect or injury, put him several times in danger of assassination, and he was more than once seriously wounded; this rendered him not a little nervous whenever he had offended any one whose arm there was reason to dread, and he would at such times confine himself to his house, which he strongly barricadoed, and not stir out till his enemy had either left the city or was pacified. Pietro Strozzi, a celebrated captain, kept him for some time in this condition; but an English ambassador, whom he had accused of reserving some of the money sent him by Henry VIII., set six or seven armed men to watch him, who severely wounded him in the arm, and left him for dead.

It was not, however, by the dagger of the assassin that Aretino was to lose his life, and he continued to pursue his favourite occupations of writing satires or laudatory epistles, of admiring paintings, playing on the harpsichord, or some similar instrument, and conversing with his friends over the elegant banquets he prepared for them, as

if he had had as few enemies as less conspicuous characters. The exact manner in which his career terminated, has not been decided by his biographers; by some it is said, and their opinion gained general credit for many years, that his death was marked with as great a degree of infamy as that which stained the worst periods of his life. According to these accounts, some friend had come to pay him a visit, and chose, as the most amusing subject for conversation, the flagitious conduct of his host's sisters, whose character, it has been already observed, was little calculated to increase his respectability. Aretino, so far from blushing at the details, was thrown into a most violent fit of laughter, and leaning back in his chair, the feet flew from under him, when falling on his head, his skull was fractured, and he almost instantly expired.

The whole of this tale, however, is said to have been fabricated,* and there is something so appallingly atrocious in the idea it would give us of Aretino's character, that for the credit of humanity we should wish to discredit it, unless it rested on the most substantial evidence. There also seems to be good reasons for doubting it of another kind besides those resulting from the absence of suf-

* Mazzuchelli.

ficient testimony to the fact. From Aretino's conduct towards his daughters; from a certain degree of pride which appeared in his character; from his general professions of being a friend to virtue, and the acquaintance he enjoyed with so many eminent individuals, both in Venice and elsewhere, it can scarcely be considered credible that he would have regarded the infamy of his family as a subject of ridicule, or that he would not have felt too much fear at its becoming publicly known, to prevent him from treating it with levity. Guilty, moreover, as he was of many and gross vices, there is nothing sufficiently bad in the sentiments which he uttered in his own person when writing to his acquaintances, to lead us to suppose that his nature was so completely corrupt, or his heart so entirely blackened by vice, as to make the licentious abandonment of his sisters a proper object to excite the mirth of a dinner-table.

But if Aretino was not guilty of an offence against human nature so dark as that just mentioned, he still remains accused of one but a few degrees removed from it, and even fully as bad, did not our knowledge of his opinions furnish us with something like an apology in his favour. After having, it is said, lain ill some time, he was given

over by his physicians, and advised to prepare for death; submitting himself accordingly to the usual ceremonies of the church, he received the sacrament, and, lastly, extreme unction; but he was no sooner anointed with the holy oil, than he exclaimed—

"Gardatemi da topi or che son unto."

Something worse than levity there is reason to fear was implied in these sarcasms on the rites of the Roman Church, and to whatever communion we may belong, the mind of every person of right feeling shrinks with aversion from one who could insult an object or a custom which those about him were regarding as worthy of veneration. It is one of the first obligations of civil society that each of its members respect the decision of the community at large, and if this be allowed to hold good in things of mere outward convenience, it surely ought to apply to the opinions which men consider of the highest importance to their future as well as present happiness, and which they continue to cherish, while their ideas on every other subject, perhaps, are continually varying. Such persons as Aretino, professing to be above the rest of mankind by superiority of discernment, forget that

knowledge confers upon them the power of enlightening, not the right of exercising a species of intellectual tyranny for their own amusement. Ridicule and sarcasm are only lawful when levied against voluntary error, and where the wounds they inflict may serve the double purpose of punishing and correcting folly. In religious matters, therefore, these weapons can rarely be used with safety or justice. So long as a large number of persons regard certain opinions, or rites, as necessary and venerable, truth and reason only afford the proper means for attack, because it is on these the dogmas, however erroneous, are supposed to be founded, and to attack a man with ridicule because he does that which he has thought it right to do from infancy, is scarcely less unjust than it would be to burn him for speaking truth.

But however reprehensible Aretino was for the mode he employed to express his disregard of the rites of the Church, he scarcely merits the fiery censures which were heaped upon him by his contemporaries. It should be remembered that he had from earliest youth manifested a strong dislike to what he regarded as the superstitions of his age, and of the Church to which he outwardly belonged; that he had on many occasions expressed

himself to this purpose, never concealing his sentiments except when playing the courtier, and then only so slightly, that his heretical opinions might be clearly discerned under the thin veil of his flattery. The sarcasm, therefore, which he uttered, was only one of a thousand which he had been accustomed to scatter in sport among his friends; it was not the cold and calculated insult of the atheist, but the wanton and petulant vanity of the satirist; and if he had not given his enemies many more important and juster reasons for blackening his memory, his witticisms would have merited no greater reprehension than what is due to levity when usurping the place of reflection and propriety.

In estimating the literary character of Aretino, it is difficult to determine in what that remarkable excellence consisted which obtained him the friendship of so many distinguished characters. His works in the present age are rarely opened, and contain little or nothing to attract attention either in style or matter. The portion most interesting is that which consists of his numerous epistles, in which are found many passages strikingly illustrative of the period when they were written, and affording an excellent mirror of the

author's character and pursuits. But amusing and not unuseful as these epistles are to the inquisitive scholar, they would be found unreadable to persons in general, and with these, his satires, his plays, his sacred dramas and other religious poems, all at our hands, we shall still be left to wonder at the success with which he pursued the profession of an author. But it must not be forgotten that though dull to us in the present day, a large proportion of both the epistles and poems made allusions to persons and events which, when they were written, entirely occupied men's attention; and every species of composition which can be made the vehicle of direct compliment or pungent satire is sure to succeed if managed with tolerable adroitness. All persons can understand praise and censure, even when conveyed in the shape of allegories or half concealed under an abundance of poetical ornament. Aretino, therefore, was sure not to want readers, and as success continued to increase his confidence, he spoke with greater plainness or violence. Had he rested his chance of reputation on any other kind of literature but that which makes the praise or censure of individuals its theme, he would, it is likely, have remained almost unknown, or possessed an inferior

station among the most indifferent writers of his country; but a satirist has all the ill-natured feelings of men on his side, and if he have the art to make his readers suppose that it is not their own characters but those of their neighbours to whom his sarcasms refer, though he may do little good, and there may be more abuse than genuine wit in his poems, he will seldom fail of popularity or reward. It is with writers of this kind as with an army, it is not so much their actual strength as the art with which they dispose their forces which determines their success; and in this respect Aretino was probably superior to any satirist that ever wielded the pen. He flattered the great, but always kept them in awe of his lash should they chance to offend him; he thus effected as much by servility as he did by satire, the former giving greater poignancy to the latter, and the latter more value to the former, as his patrons saw the contrast between his behaviour to them and to his enemies. To those who rewarded his attachment by rich presents and pensions he expressed himself a most devoted lover of truth, and as willing to sacrifice any thing in its support; a declaration of this kind was the general accompaniment of an epistle filled with the grossest flattery, and it

is scarcely credible that the noble personages to whom he addressed himself should have been wholly blind to his art; but besides the professions he made of his great love of truth, they found him speaking to others in a manner which they imagined could be only prompted by this virtuous principle, and thus viewing in connexion his compliments to them and his satires upon others, they considered the one as really elicited by their merits, and the other as the indignant voice of truth, their satisfaction at the conduct of the writer towards themselves being sufficient to make them find both power and skill in his sarcasms.

If this may account in some measure for the applause he elicited from the nobles, it is much easier to explain the phenomenon of his success with the people at large. A writer of the most moderate talents may at any time obtain the admiration of the vulgar by strongly infusing his compositions with abuse of their superiors; this has been observed from time immemorial, and will continue to be the case till human nature has undergone a greater change than it has ever yet experienced. Aretino was, however, well qualified to write in a manner calculated to attract the attention of the people. He had passed his youth

among persons little refined by education, and was unincumbered by heavy scholastic erudition—he had learnt how to engage their notice by the fantastic tricks and expressions which they best comprehend—he was indifferent as to the laws of good taste or delicacy, and possessed courage sufficient to make himself appear their leader against those they disliked. Had he been much less ingenious than he actually was, these qualifications would have enabled him to make his way as a popular satirist, it being a remarkable fact that thousands of persons, whom it would be difficult to amuse by any other species of writing, if not imbued with genuine humour, will listen with great zest to the most stupid ballad that was ever penned if it purpose to be a satire on some known and unpopular character.

Nor was Aretino altogether unassisted in his career by that incomparable vanity which formed so distinguishing a feature of his character. The confidence he felt in his own powers was unbounded, and in this he was confirmed by the facility with which he composed the most celebrated of his works. Thus he says that he was accustomed in the early part of his career to write forty stanzas in a morning—that the comedy of

"Marescalco" was composed in ten mornings, and that of "Filocopo" in the same time—that the "Ippocrito" and "Talanta" were written in less time than it would take to copy them, and were composed in the intervals of the night which he stole from sleep. Two hours a day, it is also farther affirmed, were all that he ever gave to study or writing; and that when he composed, the only assistance he required was from pens, ink, and paper, on which last particular, it is shrewdly observed by his biographer, Mazzuchelli, that the histories which he wrote must necessarily have been rather deficient in correctness and authority. But how strongly he was possessed with the idea of his own excellence is proved still more from the means he made use of to spread his name over Italy and other parts of the world. Besides having his portrait taken several times, he ordered three medals to be struck bearing his likeness and inscribed with his name at length, "The divine Aretino." His letters to his friends are full of the same indications of his vanity, and gross as may be the praise he bestowed on his patrons, he never flattered any person more extravagantly than he did himself. It was his favourite boast that he

was the first Italian author who had ever published his epistolary correspondence, and he had formed the very highest opinion of the excellence of his letters. Bernardo Tasso, however, chanced to say that there was no Italian writer of letters worthy of imitation; and so enraged was Aretino, when he discovered that Bernardo had thus expressed himself, that he immediately wrote to him, expressing both his anger and contempt at what he considered an attack on his reputation. "What a god," exclaims he, "would you consider yourself if you had published your volume as many years before me as I have before you." And towards the conclusion he says, that without either riding post, serving courts, or even moving a step, he had made dukes, princes, and sovereigns tributary to virtue; —that his fame was spread throughout all the world, and that they prized his portrait and held his name in esteem in the distant countries of India and Persia. "Wherefore," continues he, "I exhort you to counsel and not to fury; but since anger is more powerful in your breast than reason, I give you the choice of both arms and ground;" the nature of which challenge is explained in a former part of the letter, where he

tells Tasso that he was only fit to sing love-songs, and calls him to a trial of skill that all the world may see who is superior.*

He commonly styled himself the divine Aretino, and ornamented the frontispiece of his books with the inscription "Per divina gracia homo libero," or "Ecco Il Flagello de' Principi," while the estimation in which he asserted his portraits were held all over the world induced him to have medals struck with his likeness, which he sent as a mark of high honour to some of the greatest men of Europe. His portrait he gave to the King of France, and seems to have considered it a present worthy of a king; as, besides observing that people placed his likeness in their drawing-rooms and in every part of their houses, ornamenting even their looking-glasses and other articles of furniture with it, he says, that it was as famous as those of Alexander the Great, of Cæsar, and of Scipio. Of the value of his praise he had no less an opinion, and he observed that if he had praised Christ as much as he had the Emperor, he should have had more treasures in heaven than he ever had debts on earth, asserting at the same time that he was never either proud, ungrateful, or ambitious.

* Lettere, vol. v. p. 187.

It is not, however, to be supposed, that he was only supported in his high opinion of himself by his own vanity. Besides the attentions he received from the princes who patronized him, and which would have had a similar effect on most men of ordinary mind, he was flattered by his acquaintances in the same manner as he complimented King Henry, and the Emperor. He was not only termed the Divine, but the Censor of the World, the Oracle of Truth, and even the fifth Evangelist; more than one preacher, it is said, not deeming it improper to allude to his writings from the pulpit. To account in some measure for the latter circumstance, it must be remembered that he wrote the Life of the Virgin Mary, of St. Catherine, and our Lord, as well as some other religious works; but by whatever means he acquired it, the reputation he enjoyed is not the less extraordinary, considering that he possessed neither the advantages derivable from education, nor those high qualities of genius which command attention. Nor was it merely as a writer that he obtained respect; his judgment was considered so excellent, that authors were accustomed to purchase his opinion on their compositions, which they sent to him for that purpose before publishing them. By a curious little note found among

his epistles, we learn that he was not very courteous in his treatment of these applicants if they neglected to fee him in a liberal manner. "If you knew," says he in the letter alluded to, "as well how to give, as you do how to versify, Alexander and Cæsar might go to bed; attend then to your verses, since liberality is not your art!"*

Of the actual merit of Aretino as a writer, there is scarcely but one opinion. The reputation he enjoyed while living, may be accounted for as above, and he is far from being the only instance in which little genuine talent with a great deal of assurance, and cunning in the employment of that little, has obtained for a writer considerable temporary celebrity. As a poet, he seems never to have aimed at any elevation of the imagination, and seldom manifests any fervour of feeling or sentiment. His prose works are similarly cold, but both in these and his poems there is a certain degree of wit, and ingenuity of expression, with occasional gleams of original thought, that might be sufficient to excite the admiration of persons either afraid of his abuse, or gratified by his praise. His style, however, in general, is rendered both unreadable and incapable of translation, by constant transpositions, and the

* Lettere, vol. ii. p. 148.

obscurity of many of the ideas. "It has neither elegance nor grace," says Tiraboschi, "and he seems to have been the first to employ those ridiculous hyperboles and strange metaphors, which were in such frequent use in the following age." The learned author then cites as an illustration, what Aretino says of his Capitoli in one of his letters, "'In those which have the motion of the sun the lines of the viscera are rounded, the muscles of the intentions are raised and the profiles of the intrinsical affections distended.' I have never," continues the historian, "seen books so silly and useless as those of this impostor." The vileness of Aretino's mind was equal to his profound ignorance, his private interest and gain being the evident object of all he wrote. Nor were critics wanting during his life-time, who, being neither deceived by his pretensions, nor frightened by his threats, openly dared to express their contempt of his writings. Among his enemies, he numbered some of the most famous men of the age; Il Doni and Berni were the foremost, and attacked him in his own style with a vengeful violence of language that the nerves of a modern reader can scarcely bear. Niccolo Franco, his former friend, the poet Albicante, Girolamo Muzio, Gabriello Faerno, were not

less his enemies, and the opinions expressed by these writers, with the rancour of personal hatred, have been universally adopted by their successors in Italy and elsewhere.

The works of Aretino are very numerous; but as has been seen, it is to the name he obtained among his contemporaries, and not to the merit of his writings he owes a place among his worthier and more distinguished countrymen. His principal prose compositions are his Letters in six volumes; his Comedies, the Lives of the Virgin Mary, St. Catherine, St. Thomas Aquinas, and our Saviour; three books on the Humanity of Christ, a treatise entitled Il Genesi, with the Vision of Noah, and a Paraphrase of the seven Penitential Psalms. His poems consist of laudatory verses dedicated to various great men; the Strambotti alla Villanesca; the Horaoio, a dramatic poem; the first two cantos of the Orlandino, written as a burlesque on Ariosto, Pulci, and other romancers; and miscellaneous pieces and satires.

The Life of Bernardo Tasso.

Bernardo Tasso.

The name of Tasso, now only known by the splendour of its literary glory, had been ennobled for centuries before the birth of Bernardo, by the actions of his illustrious ancestors. It is, however, creditable to human nature to find how little honours of any other kind are regarded, when exposed to comparison with those which belong to intellectual eminence. The forefathers of Bernardo, and the more celebrated Torquato, were men of high renown in their day, and merited the distinction they received; but scarcely any one, except the biographer or antiquary, would ever think of inquiring into their history, were it not for their

connection with the admirable poets who have immortalized the name. Till the accurate investigations of Serassi proved to the contrary, it was commonly believed that the family of the Tassi was derived from that of the Torriani, Lords of Milan: but the earliest accounts to be depended upon, represent them as established at Almenno, about five miles from Bergamo, and soon after as Lords of Cornello, a mountainous district in the neighbourhood. In 1290, Omodeo de' Tassi invented the system of regular posts, and his descendants becoming the general superintendents of the offices in Flanders, Spain, and Germany, they rose to the highest dignities, and, in the latter country, became sovereign Princes.

Bernardo was born on the 11th of November 1493, at Bergamo.* The latter point, however, has been disputed, some of his biographers contending that he first saw the light at Venice; but it is generally allowed, that no sufficient proofs can be advanced to support this opinion, and Bergamo is, therefore, left in the peaceable enjoyment of its honour as his birth-place. His parents were Gabriele, son of Giovanni, and Caterina de' Tassi del Cornello, descended from two branches of the same

* Serassi. † Seghezzi.

distinguished family. The first instructor to whom his education was intrusted was Gio. Batista Pio, of Bologna, under whose care he manifested a singular aptitude for learning, and inspired his parents with sanguine hopes of his future eminence; but, while still a child, both his father and mother were taken off by a premature death, and he was left with a sister, still younger than himself, to the care of his maternal uncle, Luigi Tasso, Bishop of Recanati. The property which he inherited from his father was not sufficient to support and educate him; but Luigi placed him in an academy, and his little sister in a monastery, paying for their education out of his own purse. The progress which the orphans made in their respective studies, sufficiently rewarded him for his benevolence. Bordelisia became a nun, and took the name of Afra, distinguishing herself by so sweet and amiable a conduct, that her memory was revered long after her death by the sisters of Santa Grata. Bernardo applied himself to the classics, and, in a few years, was remarkable for his extensive acquaintance with the best authors of Greece and Rome. He also composed poems in Italian, which attracted still greater attention: and, in a villa belonging to his uncle at Redona, about a mile from Bergamo, he

was accustomed thus to refresh himself from severer studies, while his verses were considered equal to those of Bembo, and soon obtained him the praise of all Italy. But, during one of his visits to this villa, the Bishop, who had shortly before arrived there, was cruelly murdered, and the house stripped of its most valuable effects by some of the domestics.

The death of his uncle, whom he loved as a parent, again left Bernardo comparatively destitute. He had, however, it seems, sufficient property to enable him to travel and spend a life of leisure. Bidding adieu, therefore, to Bergamo, he set out on his wanderings, and, in the early part of them, became acquainted with Ginevra Malatesta, a lady whom he has represented as a paragon of beauty and virtue. His passion for this lady was characteristic of his ardent and poetical temperament; and he dedicated to her many of the best efforts of his muse: but, when she became the wife of a gentleman of the Obizzi family, he bade her a formal farewell in a sonnet, which is greatly admired for its pathos and delicacy, and was so celebrated at the time it was written, that not a lord or lady, it is said, was to be found in Italy who could not repeat it.

Not long after this event, he grew weary of his manner of living, and, becoming desirous of bettering his fortune, attached himself to the Count Guido Rangone, General of the Pontifical forces. In the capacity of Secretary to this nobleman, Bernardo was witness to the desperate struggles which took place between Clement VII. and the Emperor, and was deputed by Guido to carry on some of the most important of his negotiations for the Pope and the allies. After having shown considerable talent in the conduct of these affairs, he left the service of Guido at the termination of the war, and proceeded to Ferrara, where he received from the Duchess many tokens of respect, and was appointed her Secretary. He, however, remained only a short time in her employ, and removed to Padua, where he was unwillingly involved in the disputes between Pietro Bembo and Broccardo: this was, probably, the cause of his leaving that city for Venice, whither he repaired after making friends with Bembo, and explaining in a sonnet the supposed allusions which had been received by the Cardinal as an intended insult on his person. At Venice he found many of his early acquaintances, and, having collected the various pieces of poetry he had composed, he published them in

the year 1531, dedicating them to Ginevra Malatesta.*

This volume of poems added greatly to the reputation he had already acquired, and attracted the attention of Ferrante Sanseverino, Prince of Salerno, himself a poet of considerable ability. Delighted with the genius displayed in the verses now published, and having heard of the author's talent for business, he sent him a pressing invitation to Salerno, offering, at the same time, to make him his Secretary. Bernardo accepted the offer, and, quickly obtaining the entire confidence of the Prince, was rewarded for his services by the grant of numerous and valuable offices. Thus increasing in wealth, he took a splendid house, and lived in a style of costly magnificence. His public employments, however, had not the effect of drawing him from his attachment to poetry: and, in the year 1534, he re-published his former collection, with the addition of several new pieces, dedicating the work in general to the Prince, but the second portion of it to his consort, Isabella Villamarina. Soon after this, he accompanied his patron to Africa, on occasion of the expedition of Charles V. against Tunis. At his

* Seghezzi. Serassi.

return, he brought with him the curious arabesque vase, which is mentioned in two of Torquato's sonnets, and several poems composed during his absence, and which he published in 1537, under the title of the "Terzo Libro degli Amori." About two years after he married Porzia de' Rossi, daughter of Giacomo di Pistoia and Lucretia de' Gambacozti, formerly Lords of Pisa, and subsequently Marquesses of Celenza. By this union, therefore, he became connected with some of the greatest personages in Italy, besides which his wife brought him a considerable fortune, and, possessing an agreeable person and amiable disposition, she enjoyed his uninterrupted affection till death separated them. Their first child, Cornelia, was remarkable, in her infancy, for wit and intelligence, and, to secure her from the dangers of the court, was, at an early age, placed in a convent. Their next was named Torquato, but he died in his infancy, leaving the name for his illustrious brother, who was born soon after Bernardo had set out with the Prince in 1544 to join the forces of the Emperor, under his general the Marquess del Vasto.

A short time previous to this expedition, he had commenced his poem of "Amadigi." The Prince, with a liberality which did him the greatest honour,

knowing Bernardo's love of study, made few calls upon his attention, except on occasions of extraordinary necessity. Though he himself resided at Naples, and Bernardo received a stipend as his secretary, he had permitted him to live at Sorrento, in a most delicious retirement, and wholly occupy himself with the composition of poetry. The period which he spent in this uninterrupted enjoyment of literature, was the happiest of his life, and the design of the Amadigi was owing to the hope he had conceived of passing many years in these tranquil occupations. He at first determined, it is said, to write this poem in *versi sciolti*, conceiving that the rhyming metres were only fitted for light and amatory poetry. To this idea he was instigated by his friend Speroni, who had a great contempt for rhyme, and regarded it as destroying the gravity and elevation which should belong to an heroic poem. This opinion, however, was soon after controverted by the Prince, and by Don Luigi d'Avila, and others, whom he met in Flanders, after the war, and who desiring to see Bernardo imitate Ariosto, induced him to change his plan. But having at first put his materials together in prose, he began to versify them, adding, as he proceeded, such ornaments as his fancy

suggested; and, as soon as he had finished the first canto, he sent it to Speroni, begging him to examine it carefully, and submit it to Girolamo Molino, Benedetto Varchi, and some other literary acquaintances.*

His expedition with Sanseverino had not interrupted the progress of the poem. In the midst of the alarms of war and the interruptions of business, he continued to add stanza after stanza to the Amadigi, composing the greater part of the work on horseback: and, on his return home, at the conclusion of the war, he set down to complete it, seeing no reason to dread any farther interruption to his design. He was not suffered long to enjoy these hopes. The Viceroy of Naples, Don Pedro di Toleda, desirous of keeping the people in stricter subjection to the Emperor, proposed introducing the Inquisition into the province: his intention was no sooner known, than the populace expressed their indignation in the most open manner, and Don Pedro immediately declared the city in a state of insurrection. The sentiments of the Prince of Salerno were sufficiently well understood to make the people desirous of interesting him in their favour; and they accord-

* Seghezzi.

ingly deputed Carlo Brancazio to represent their grievances to him, and require his mediation with the Emperor, that the obnoxious Viceroy might be removed. Sanseverino consulted Bernardo as to the measures he ought to pursue, and was advised by the poet to indulge the people in their request. But this counsel was strongly opposed by Vincenzio Martelli, the major-domo of the Prince, who was as much in favour of the Viceroy, as Tasso disliked him. The opinion, however, of Bernardo was followed, and the Prince set off on his mission, but proceeded so slowly that the partizans of Don Pedro anticipated him with the Emperor, and he only returned to be assailed by assassins, and finally to find himself suspected by the Emperor, and obliged, for safety, to forsake his dominions, and join the King of France.

Bernardo was in Rome when he heard that the territory of Sanseverino was confiscated, and the Prince himself declared a rebel. For some time, it appears, he was uncertain in what manner to proceed, and vacillated between returning to his home, and following the fortunes of his fallen master. He at length resolved upon the latter, and was accordingly deprived of all his possessions, and the whole of the property he had collected in

his elegant residence near Salerno. It is doubted by one of his biographers whether he was induced to take this step solely from affection for Sanseverino. "Those who are willing to give full credence to the words of Tasso," says Seghezzi, "ought without doubt to ascribe this resolution to an abundant gratitude, and to his special love for his master, by whom he was so greatly benefited; but I, reflecting on the origin of things, am of opinion that he was induced to follow Sanseverino not from simple affection, but from the hope of seeing that Prince, already illustrious in reputation, received and rewarded by Henry with regal munificence, and placed in greater honour on account of the treatment he had received from the Emperor, who after having received so many and such important services at his hands, had shown him such little regard; and he was sure that if the Prince should thus obtain the favour of the King of France, his incomparable fidelity would meet with a reward equivalent to what he had lost by this conduct. Besides which, he had long nourished a deep-seated hatred to the Spaniards, and was in his heart a friend of the French. . . . . All which affords strong evidence that the resolution which Tasso took to follow the Prince to the Court of

France, had its origin in the affection he bore the French; his hope of obtaining greater advantages by it; and from his conviction that, if he did not follow Sanseverino, he should be in constant danger of insult from the Viceroy and the Imperialists." Whether this cold and selfish reasoning was indeed employed by Bernardo, on the occasion of his patron's misfortunes, must remain a matter of doubt; but we may be glad to know that the supposition rests entirely on the fancy of Seghezzi, who certainly has shown as little enthusiasm for the hero of his story, as was ever done by the most indifferent biographer. Giving all due importance to self-interest in summing up the motives of human action, he ought to have remembered that many bright instances have occurred in every age, of great fidelity and affection; that patrons have not been at all times treated with neglect when their fortunes changed; that there were many reasons to make Bernardo deeply attached to the Prince of Salerno, and that his character was sufficiently virtuous and noble to make it more probable that gratitude rather than selfishness would influence his actions. The fact is, prudence might very properly dictate the course he pursued; but it does not follow that because fidelity and caution

happened in this instance to give the same counsel, the former would not have been preserved had it been otherwise. Messer Antonio Federigo Seghezzi has indeed neither proved his judgment, nor increased our opinion of his good feeling, by expressing such imaginary doubts of Bernardo's honesty. Having, however, taken the resolution of following Sanseverino, our poet removed his wife and daughter to Naples, where he had provided them splendid apartments in the palace Gambacosti, in order that Porzia might be near her relatives, on whom he vainly hoped she might depend for comfort in her distress. He then joined the Prince at Venice, and after spending a few days at Bergamo, was sent to France in September 1552, where he lost no time in opening his views to the King, whom he endeavoured to persuade that, by forming a union with Soliman, he might attack Naples with certain success, and at once humble the power of the Emperor. Henry listened with sufficient attention to these proposals to induce the Prince and Bernardo to hope that they should be speedily restored in triumph to their country; but to effect the intended plan, it was necessary that Sanseverino should proceed to Constantinople to obtain the concurrence of the Sul-

tan; and during his absence in the East, Bernardo took up his residence at St. Germain's, where he amused himself with composing several light pieces of poetry, the chief of which were in praise of Margaret of Valois. On the return of the Prince, their hopes of succour were found to have been false. The Sultan was unwilling to engage in the project, and Henry on that account still more so. Bernardo, therefore, having nothing farther to retain him near the person of his patron, returned to Rome, where he corresponded with him secretly on the state of their affairs, and the measures to be adopted for their improvement.

The change which had taken place in his fortune, made no alteration in his desire of literary fame, and having added greatly to his miscellaneous compositions, he sent his later productions to Lodovico Dolce at Venice, where he had already published in 1551 two volumes of letters, under the care of the same friend. The whole of his former poems were reprinted with those now sent for publication, and the work appeared in 1555, beautifully printed by Gabriel Giolito.* His Amadigi in the mean time was gradually increasing under his hand, and in the letter which accompanied the poems

* Serassi.

sent to Lodovico for publication, he observes, that he was approaching the conclusion. In speaking of his situation at this period, and of his compositions, he says, "I have delayed, my most gentle Lodovico, to send you this fourth book from the desire of at least letting you have the copy well and correctly written; but my long and troublesome indisposition, though not dangerous, has hindered my doing so. Not to delay the fulfilment of my wishes, therefore, any longer, I send you them neither punctuated, nor remarkably correct; being certain from the affection you bear me, that you will not think it too great a fatigue to do that for me which I have not been able to do for myself. I give you, therefore, authority not only to alter the writing, which has certainly much need of it in many places, but the sentences and the words; the opinion I have of your judgment, and the affection you bear me, securing me from any danger of suffering by this confidence. Print, then, the three books of my Amours first, and then this fourth book with the dedication to Madame Margherita, which I hereby send you, and in the order in which it is to appear. And as there are in the third book of the Rime di Diversi Autori, canzoni and sonnets written by me, but ascribed to M. Randolfo Porrino, and as I

think the laws allow a man to take his own coat wherever he finds it, if he know it to be his own, I have put these same pieces in this book, being certain that that excellent man, who would probably not have deigned to place my verses in comparison with his, will not be offended at my so doing. I moreover beg you to pray M. Gabriello to let the copies which he is to send me as marks of respect for my friends, be printed on good paper, and somewhat larger than the rest, and especially the copy which I intend sending to the Court of France, and I will pay the expense of the paper." Dated Rome, October 20, 1554.*

But the pleasure he derived from his literary occupations, which lightened considerably the weight of his misfortunes, was suddenly interrupted by the intelligence which reached him, in the spring of 1556, of the death of his wife. The affliction he felt at the loss of this amiable woman, who had won his affections by her virtues and the tenderness of her disposition, was increased by the reproaches he made his conscience for having left her exposed to the machinations of designing relatives. He had scarcely, it seems, proceeded to France when attempts were made by her brothers

* Lettere, vol. ii. p. 144.

to deprive her of her fortune. In vain did she strive to escape their persecutions and rejoin her husband, who sighed for her presence in Rome. So skilfully did they pursue their plans that to leave the country would, she knew, be the means of immediately depriving her children of support. All she could do, therefore, was to remove with her daughter to the convent of S. Festo, and send Torquato to Rome. She was still, however, involved in distressing law-suits and altercations, which her health and spirits were ill calculated to support. The result was such as might have been expected: two-thirds of her dowry were taken from her, a drawback of fifteen hundred ducats was made on the income previously received, and at the end of the suits the unfortunate lady died, if not broken-hearted, so oppressed by the various troubles she had had to contend with, that her husband attributed her death almost solely to that cause.

The circumstances which had thus contributed so materially to deprive Bernardo of his affectionate consort, affected him also in another way. His property having been almost entirely dissipated, all he had left for his support was the allowance he received from Sanseverino; but that Prince, either from the bad state of his own cir-

cumstances, or from having less regard for his secretary, now that his talents were of little use to him, neglected to remit the pension, and Bernardo was left in a situation of extreme difficulty. In a letter written to the Prince soon after the death of his wife, he expresses himself with feelings which seem to have partaken both of sorrow and anger. His letters and applications, he says, had all been left unanswered: "In my last," continues he, "I informed you of the death of my unfortunate wife, with the total ruin of my miserable children, who by the loss of their mother are deprived of their inheritance and the only hope and support of their lives. Think, my Lord, what must be my situation, and whether I do not stand in need of consolation and assistance; yet I must confess that your conduct towards me distresses me more than all my losses and troubles. One satisfaction only remains to me, and it is the clearness of my conscience, the faithful witness of my actions, which were always directed by my wish to serve and honour you, nor have I the slightest cause of remorse, nor the least suspicious circumstance, to deface the purity of that conscience. . . . . I do not wish to reprove you by enumerating my services, but your Excellency knows and

the world knows my fidelity, which has been exhibited as openly as a drama in a theatre;—God, from whom no secret of the heart can be hidden, knows it, and as He has seen that no prince could be served with more fidelity, with more affection than I have served you, so I pray that He may either inspire your Excellency to reward my services with that liberality of mind which becomes a grateful and virtuous prince, or that He may give me patience to support my wrongs and provide for my necessities."*

This letter does not appear to have had the effect of moving the Prince's attention, as we find Bernardo shortly after writing to him again, and expressing his increased distress at the neglect with which he finds himself treated. "If, illustrious Signior," says he, "it be lawful for a virtuous cavalier to yield up a castle or a city long besieged, on which the safety of a prince and a nation depends because of famine, I may well and with a good conscience relieve my mind of that devotion to your Excellency, which I have preserved for twenty-seven years, and transfer it to another. I did not lose my friends, squander away my very wardrobe, destroy my credit, suffer

* Lettere, vol. ii. p. 170.

innumerable hardships to come to this—I have applied myself for relief and made the application by others, but you have not only disdained to provide for my wants, but even to answer my letters, or those which have been written on my behalf, hoping by that means to remove the useless burden from your shoulders. And this you have done, but not in a manner favourable to your reputation, the world knowing that I have served you with the fidelity and love which we owe to God. . . . . My long service and loyalty, and the loss I have suffered of my fortune, merit not this return. Remember that God, the righteous judge of our actions, will not without anger see you making a beggar of a poor unfortunate son, and burning up by your ingratitude as with a fire, all that is necessary to support his existence. Examine well your conscience; consider your conduct towards me, and what the world will think of you. I shall seek, as I can do no otherwise, the service of some other prince; you have enjoyed the energies of my youth, another will purchase me as an old horse—worthy of a place in his stable on account of his former reputation."* He then tells him that he has still a faithful regard for him, and concludes by

* Lettere, vol. ii. p. 401.

urgently intreating him to send the three hundred scudi he is in advance, in order that he may redeem his wardrobe, the whole of which was in pledge, and pay his debts. This letter is dated August 5, 1558, and met with the same treatment as those formerly sent. Bernardo, therefore, finding himself entirely deserted by his patron, applied the following year to Rui Gomez, Prince of Evoli, to obtain his interference with his Majesty. In the letter which contains this request he enters into a full account of the various vicissitudes of his life, and describes himself as left old and poor with his children, and as being sunk still deeper in misery by the death of his beloved and unfortunate wife, and the persecutions which had deprived his children of their inheritance. The style in which he expresses himself on this occasion is remarkably florid. Speaking of the Prince, he says, "As God has placed the sun in the heavens, a most beauteous and joyful image of himself, and which, by its lucid and fertilizing rays diffused among all created things, nourishes, increases, and vivifies them, so has he placed the Prince on the earth that he may imitate him by extending over men the arms of his benignity and clemency."

Bernardo having thus found that neither re-

monstrance nor entreaty could move his patron, at length determined to fix himself at Rome, and, taking the habit of a priest, pass the remainder of his life in the service of religion: but he had no sooner formed this resolution than intelligence arrived that the Imperial forces had occupied Ostia, Tivoli, and the whole neighbourhood of the city. As they were daily expected to continue their march to the very walls of Rome, he knew that he could only remain there with the greatest peril, and with some difficulty he contrived to escape accompanied by two servants, and taking with him nothing more than a few clothes and his poems. He bent his course to Ravenna, where he proposed staying till the situation of Rome should be altered; but the Duke of Urbino no sooner heard of his arrival than he sent him an urgent invitation to Pesaro, where he appointed for his residence the Stanza del Barchetto, which had been built by his father for the sole enjoyment of the literary pleasures to which he was devoted. Here Bernardo found repose from the toils he had suffered so many years, and was enabled to heal the wounds his late misfortunes had inflicted by undisturbed reflection. He now also sent for his son Torquato, and had the delight of seeing the

promises of his infancy present every appearance of being fulfilled; having, previous to his own departure from Rome, sent him on a visit to his relations at Bergamo, from whom he had the gratification of receiving intelligence which confirmed his hopes of Torquato's future eminence. Thus relieved from the anxieties, to which the ruin of his fortunes had given birth, secure in the enjoyment of a tranquil home, and animated by the prospect of seeing his son become worthy of his name, he gave himself up to the correction and completion of his Amadigi, which was at last made ready for the press. Bernardo had conceived the most sanguine expectations respecting the success of this work, and from the interest with which its appearance was looked for in all the literary circles of Europe, he had reason to hope that it would permanently establish his fame.

But the printing of so long a work as the Amadigi, was an undertaking of no slight expense, and to a man in Bernardo's situation, was not to be easily accomplished. It is, therefore, creditable to the Venetian academicians of that age, to have it left on record that they offered to print the work at the expense of their establishment. The

anxiety, however, which Bernardo felt to profit by the publication, prevented his accepting this offer, and he had the good fortune to obtain the kind assistance of the Duke his protector, the Cardinal di Tornone, and others, towards the expenses.* Having received, therefore, the contributions of his friends, he set off for Venice in 1558, to superintend the printing himself, and had the pleasure of seeing his work appear with all the correctness and elegance an author could desire. Besides the Amadigi, his "Rime" were also printed at the same time, and the second volume of his Letters; and two years after, that is in 1562, his "Ragionamento," which he had previously recited before the academy.

But about the same period the attention of Bernardo was recalled from literature to the cares of his family. His daughter, whom he loved with the tenderest affection, and whose virtues and beauty were equal to those of the lamented Porzia, was married without his consent to Marzio Sersale, a poor gentleman of Sorrento. The union, it appears, had been accomplished through the unjust intervention of Scipio Rossi, one of her maternal relatives, and the father regarded the circumstance as adding

* Serassi.

greatly to his former distresses, it having always been his hope that Cornelia, by being settled near him, would be able to comfort him in his old age, and in some measure supply by her attentions the place of her mother; but having married a person whose residence was in the territory of Naples, he lost all hope of enjoying her society, and therefore most deeply lamented the event. So good a report, however, was shortly brought him of the virtues of his son-in-law, that he gradually ceased to complain, and wrote to Marzio expressing his paternal feelings towards him. "Your letters," says he, "are very dear to me, and if I consented not to your marriage, it was not on your account, but from a desire that my daughter should marry in a part of the country where I might enjoy, from frequently seeing her, that consolation which an affectionate parent looks for. But since it has pleased God, who rules all things according to his will, to order it thus, I have already made his will mine, and look upon you now in the same manner as if you had been chosen by me for a son-in-law, only wishing that Cornelia had not used those expressions towards me and her brother which become not an affectionate and pious daughter; but I pardon all, and am afflicted that the righteous

Judge has punished her as he has done."* The last words allude to a loss Cornelia and her husband had lately suffered by the descent of some corsairs on Sorrento, and from whose hands, it appears from another letter of Bernardo, they themselves had a very narrow escape.

The attention which Bernardo experienced at Venice was of the most flattering description. There were residing there at that time his friend Lodovico Dolce, and several other literary acquaintances, who honoured his talents, and received him among them as a valuable addition to their circle. Shortly after his arrival he was elected, through their recommendations, secretary of the academy, and had a regular stipend appointed him in virtue of his office. His circumstances being thus considerably improved, and his spirits becoming better every day, he hired a handsome house, which, having always had a taste for elegant furniture, as appeared by his residence at Sorrento, he fitted up in a style of comparative magnificence. He had at the same time sent for Torquato, who reached Venice a few months after his own arrival there, and who found that city as agreeable to his taste as it was to his father's.

* Lettere, vol. ii. p. 473.

Bernardo, as it has been said, placed the greatest hopes both of reputation and pecuniary advantage on the publication of the Amadigi, nor had he neglected to employ any means which appeared likely to produce the desired results. He had begun it, it is affirmed, in order to please his patron and the nobles of the Spanish Court, with whom he happened to be for a time associated. According to his own judgment, it would have appeared better in the grave and sonorous heroic measure, but at their suggestion, he complacently undertook to rival Ariosto. In the original plan of the story, the rules of the epic were followed with the most careful attention; there was to be but a single action, and the design was so perfect and regular, according to Torquato, that the most rigid critic could not have found fault with it; but according to the same authority we learn that his desire of pleasing his patron overcame his better judgment, or rather, that he was willing to sacrifice his character as a poet to his ambition as a courtier. Having composed, it seems, some of the first cantos after his own plan, he read them to the Prince, and at the commencement of the reading, either the reputation he already possessed, or curiosity to hear so interesting a romance as the

Amadis versified in Italian, collected a large number of nobles and gentlemen of the court; before, however, he arrived at the conclusion of this essay, the room was nearly empty, and he concluded from this circumstance that if he meant to please, he must not attempt to do so by unity of design or action, and he accordingly, though as Torquato says, unwillingly, complied with the desires of Sanseverino, and forsook the rules of Aristotle and the critics, for the suggestions of the Court. But he not only changed the style and plan of the poem in obedience to the will of those from whom he expected promotion, but subsequently altered even the characters from a similar motive. The Duke of Urbino, who was as true a friend as he had ever possessed, was anxious that he might reap all the advantage from the publication he expected, and as he was now himself connected with the Spanish monarch, Philip II., he hoped that Bernardo might by proper management obtain a reversal of the decree which banished him and confiscated his property. The poet, unwilling to lose any opportunity for effecting such an object, consented to follow the Duke's advice, and instead of dedicating the work to Henry II. of France, as he had always intended, resolved to bring it out under

the patronage of Philip. But this determination made it necessary to change not merely the dedication, but some very important parts of the poem. It contained in its original shape, and just as it was about to appear, several long passages in praise of the French King and different members of his family; the personages also of the tale represented, in more than one instance, individuals of the royal house; the change in the dedication made it necessary that all these should be either removed or modified in such a manner as to conceal the proper intention of the author. Bernardo, therefore, could be charged with no imprudent obstinacy with regard to his poem; few authors were ever more willing to follow advice than he appears to have been; and were the fortune of a man of letters to be made by such means, Bernardo Tasso must surely have acquired one. Nor did he rest satisfied with merely attending to the composition of the work. He laid all his plans respecting the publication with the greatest caution. Having taken the advice of many of the best critics respecting its correctness, he next carefully calculated in what manner he might best secure its producing him a profitable return for his labours. Rejecting, as we have seen, the interference

of the Academy, he very prudently formed an arrangement with the printer, Gabriel Giolito, by which he freed himself from a part of the risk, and was probably enabled to bring out the work in a style of elegance superior to that which his own resources, although assisted as he was, would have enabled him to afford. He even hoped to persuade Giolito to illustrate the whole poem with engravings, but the undertaking was found to be too great, and he was well contented to send some of the best copies to his noble friends elegantly bound. But notwithstanding all these preparations, the complacency with which he attended to the wishes of Princes and courtiers, and the care he bestowed on the arrangements which concerned the publication, the Amadigi was far from obtaining the success which the author expected. The hundred and fifty persons to whom he sent copies did little more than return him civil thanks for the compliment; and what was more distressing to him, Philip, who he hoped would be moved by the dedication to restore him to his former condition, treated it with indifference, and left the poet unrewarded and unnoticed.

A stronger lesson was never read to authors than this of Bernardo's on the subject of patronage.

His weak yielding to the caprices of those about him, marred his original purpose in the composition of his poem, and thereby took away that pleasure which a writer feels when following his imagination on the path where they first met. The poet must be alone with his Muse, and believe in her infallibility and sanctity, or she will reveal none of those mysteries of his art by which he is to make the world venerate him as a superior being. The instant he allows himself to be drawn from the track on which he first felt his thoughts brightening into forms of beauty and glory, to doubt the potency of the charm that has led him among scenes originally indistinct, but becoming clearer and more enchanting as he proceeds, or to forget the delight he experienced when his dreams began to assume the appearance of reality, and he felt how precious is the power which gives unlimited dominion over even one province of imagination;—the moment he did this, he lost the advantageous position necessary to the success of the greatest genius, and without which ability of an inferior kind is unable to act at all. So long as an author follows the teachings of his heart, and works by the model which exists in his own mind, he will at any rate be sure of producing

compositions as excellent to the full extent as the character of his intellect. The ideas and plans which a man knows to be his own, he instinctively developes with more care than he does those which are only adopted, and thus whether it be a poem, a problem in science, or even a mechanical invention, excellence will only be in proportion to originality, because it is this alone which can excite that intellectual energy which gives either strength or beauty to the thoughts.

The little good which Bernardo had derived from the publication of his works rendered him by no means desirous that his son should become a poet. He had sent him in 1560 to Padua, where he wished him to study the civil law, as affording the best means of repairing the injuries he had suffered from the adverse fortunes of his parents. But Torquato, instead of devoting himself to the pursuits necessary to his future profession, commenced his poem of "Rinaldo," which he continued with sufficient diligence to complete and prepare for publication in about a year afterwards. The work when finished appeared to possess sufficient merit to authorize its publication, and the wishes of the young author were supported by the opinion of Girolamo Molino,

Dominico Vemiro, and other literary men of distinction, who applied to Bernardo for his permission to print it. For some time he resisted, both from an unwillingness to encourage his son in the cultivation of poetry, and from a fear that the work might not be fit to appear before the public. At length, however, his consent was obtained, and he signified this favourable change in his sentiments to Cesare Pavesi, one of Torquato's friends, and a respectable poet himself.* "I am certain, my most gentle Signior," says he, "that loving my son as you do, and as you have fully shown, you are as ready to correct him when you see any thing requiring correction, and which from the fervour of youthful vanity must often be the case, as you are to excuse him—that if affection excites the one, prudence and the laws of true friendship do the same with the other—I have, therefore, placed more confidence in your letters than I should in many others, and I thank you for your kind offices, as well on my own account as on that of my son, desiring that some opportunity may occur by which I may be able to show my gratitude. With regard to the publication of Torquato's poem, although as a loving father and jealous of

* Seghezzi.

his honour, I should have wished the contrary, I cannot but consent to satisfy the desires of so many gentlemen who have requested its publication in preference to following my own desire and judgment. I am aware that the poem is not otherwise than an extraordinary production for a young man of eighteen, both the invention and language being worthy of praise, and the wandering lights of poetry which are scattered through it; but I wished to have seen it all before it was printed, and to have examined it more accurately than I could in so short a time. But to oppose oneself to the intense desire of a young man, which like a full torrent of many waters rushes on to its end, would be a vain fatigue, and much more so as he is assisted by the interest of two such learned and judicious spirits as Vemiro and Molino, as well as many others. At any rate, he stands in much need of your aid, and that of all his other friends, that the work may be correctly printed, and I beg you very earnestly to take care of this. I am not able in this my poor fortune to offer you any other testimony of my friendship, than my will to render you all attention and service."*

This letter is dated April 1562, and in the same year Torquato's Rinaldo was printed at Venice

* Lettere, vol. ii. p. 501.

by Francesco Sanese. In the following year Bernardo had the pleasure of receiving an invitation from Guglielmo Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, to whose court he immediately proceeded, and was appointed his chief secretary. The favour he enjoyed with his new patron considerably improved his circumstances, but in a letter to Pallavicino, dated from Mantua, March 30, 1563, he still complains of his situation: "It grieves me," he says, "that our friendship has commenced in this my poor and adverse fortunes, and in which you can promise yourself so little advantage from my acquaintance—not because I fail in the desire of assisting you, but because my means fail me."*

There is no doubt, however, that, placed as he now was in the court of one of the most powerful of the Italian princes, he no longer suffered the anxieties to which he was formerly exposed; and Pallavicino, in his reply to the letter quoted above, observes, that though he might find in the examples of the many great men who had suffered poverty sufficient reasons to bear even the most hopeless necessity with patience, this could never be the lot of the most renowned Tasso, since the princes of the world would be always forced to

* Lettere, vol. ii. pp. 505. 507.

have recourse to his counsels and prudence. But occupied as his attention appears to have been with the affairs of the Duke, he found leisure for composition, and, soon after his removal to Mantua, formed the design of making a complete poem out of the episode of Floridante in the Amadigi. The idea of this work was so pleasing to his mind that he made a formal memorandum of the day of the month and week when he began to write it: "In the name of God," says the inscription on the title of the manuscript, "I commenced my Floridante on Wednesday, November 24, 1563." His multiplied occupations, however, prevented his completing the work, but it was revised and prepared for the press, after his death, by his son, who published it with a dedication to the Duke of Mantua. The manuscript of this work was shown to Seghezzi by Apostolo Zeno, and was remarked by him to be written in the clearest and most beautiful hand, which, it is also farther observed by the same author, characterised all the manuscripts of Bernardo, while the hand-writing of his son was as remarkable for indistinctness and incorrectness.

But the life of this illustrious father of a more illustrious son was now drawing to a close; after

having received various marks of respect and affection from Gonzaga, he was appointed by that prince Governor of Ostiglia, in which situation he died, September 4, 1569, and was buried by the Duke with every demonstration of honour in the church of St. Egidio, at Mantua, where shortly after a monument was raised to his memory by the same munificent patron. The inscription on the tomb was simply "Ossa Bernardi Tassi," and the Duke could not have better shown his sincere admiration of the poet's genius than by thus indicating how sacred was the spot where his ashes were interred. The same feeling was manifested in other respects by Gonzaga, it being his especial command that two pieces of tapestry, which formerly belonged to Bernardo, and bore the arms of the Tassi and Rossi, should be preserved with the greatest care among his most valued arrede. But the remains of Torquato's father were not suffered to repose undisturbed: some repairs having been ordered in the church, the monument was destroyed, to the great grief of the pious son; but it is asserted, from some expressions in one of his letters, that the body was on account of this circumstance removed to the church of St. Paul at Ferrara.*

* Seghezzi.

The character of Bernardo had many points which rendered him worthy of esteem. He was faithfully attached to his friends, and in the relations of domestic life was inspired with the tenderest and most ardent affection. His letters to his wife are filled with expressions of earnest solicitude for her happiness, and of impatience at the cruel necessity which so long and fatally separated them. In speaking of her to his friends he employed a language which would not have seemed wanting in devotion had it come from the lips of a youthful lover. The sorrow he felt at her death was deep and lasting; and it is worthy of remark that his life, unsettled as it was, appears to have been unstained by any irregularity or licentiousness of passion. His attention to the welfare of his children was equally meritorious. The sentiments he expressed at the marriage of Cornelia were full of parental tenderness, and in all the letters in which any allusion is made to Torquato, he speaks with the fond enthusiasm of a father, whose solicitude for his son's popularity in the world was only exceeded by his desire of seeing him happy. In his conduct towards others he seems to have been uniformly instigated by feelings of kindness and humanity, and to have avoid-

ed, by every means in his power, the excesses to which his poetical temperament might have otherwise led him. "The mind of man," says he, in a letter to the Cavalier Tassi, "has so many caverns in which to hide itself, that it is difficult to discover them all. I measure others by my own; nor am I willing to believe of others that which I am not able to prove in myself. I have a heart full of humanity and tenderness,—more ready to pardon than to revenge,—for which I think I rather deserve praise than blame."

Among the friends whom he acquired by the reputation of his talents, and retained by his virtues to the end of his days, were Cardinal Bembo, Brocardo, Speroni, Luigi Friuli, Vittoria Colonna, who assisted him in his difficulties, besides many others who were esteemed either for their learning or their genius. His acquaintance with Aretino was, as we have seen, interrupted by the jealousy of the satirist, and it is a matter of wonder how a person of Bernardo's amiable and virtuous character could ever have formed an intimacy with so immoral and vindictive a man; but literary reputation was sufficient in those days to make men of the most opposite feelings associate with each other, and in the learned societies of Florence and Venice there

might be found characters in close union, which in the present day, when the population of the literary world is so much greater, would form themselves into different parties, each the antipodes of the other.

In his person Bernardo is said to have been tall and well formed, to have had a broad forehead, penetrating eyes, and a thick curling beard; while his light and muscular frame enabled him to indulge in the most active pursuits, and rendered him remarkable for the easy gracefulness of his deportment.

It remains but to speak of the literary merits of this excellent man; and if we allow that he possessed only a portion of the genius for which his contemporaries, and even some later critics, gave him credit, there are few authors who have suffered more from the capriciousness of popular taste. At the time he wrote, romantic poetry was in full vogue, and the charm of Ariosto's fancy had opened the golden gates of a fairy wilderness, where it seemed generations of poets might wander and be ever discovering something new to delight the world. Nor could it be considered that it was by the peculiar originality of the Orlando Furioso that Ariosto obtained such signal success; the

foundation of the story was already known throughout Italy and Europe, and it only professed to be the continuation of a poem which by its very popularity rendered it more difficult to engraft any thing new on the same stock. From the success, therefore, of the Orlando, and the disposition of the public to receive that species of poetry with favour, it might be fairly hoped both by Bernardo and his friends that his design would prove successful, and, if not rival, at least be only second to that of Ariosto. Had these expectations been founded either on the vanity of the author, or the inexperienced judgment of his friends, it would create little surprise to find they were disappointed; but this was not the case. The talents of Bernardo had been proved by the composition of many lighter pieces of considerable merit and popularity, and his fame as a poet was extended far and wide. The work, therefore, appeared with every advantage which the name of an author can confer upon a publication, and in addition to the influence he possessed with his immediate acquaintances to aid its circulation, he numbered, as we have seen, among his friends several men whose testimony to the merits of the poem must have tended greatly to assist its circulation. Still far-

ther, the work itself is allowed to possess all the requisites of a good poem, when considered separately. "Its style," says Tiraboschi, "is elegant, and the versification harmonious and sweet; the stanzas are well arranged, and the fable, though drawn from a well-known romance, is ornamented with a variety of incidents created by the fancy and imagination of the poet. Notwithstanding all which, and though Speroni placed it before the Orlando Furioso, and it was considered by others as the best poem they had till then seen, I believe there are very few who have had the courage to read it through—for," continues the historian, "neither are the incidents so arranged as to hold the reader in suspense and lure him on, nor has the style that attractive variety, now rising into splendour and now becoming humble without losing its dignity, which seduces and charms, and prevents the reader from feeling disgust or weariness."*

This was, without doubt, the true cause of Bernardo's failure. His mind was cultivated, and his taste refined and elegant; but he appears to have wanted that fervent and luxurious fancy, which was the principal characteristic of Ariosto's genius, and without which no writer should venture on the

* Storia della Let. Ital.

composition of romantic poetry. There is, however, another cause assigned for the ill success of the Amadigi, and it has been ingeniously argued by a learned and elegant author,* that the failure must be attributed to the common acquaintance which almost every person of the age had with the romance of Amadis. The extensive circulation, indeed, both of this and other old tales of chivalry is unquestionable: they formed the favourite reading of persons in all classes of society, for society itself still felt the full influence of the customs and sentiments they were intended to represent. There was also a variety of incident in these works, a richness of colouring in the scenes, and a plainness, but strong, simple pathos in the language, which went at once home to the hearts of the readers; and these old romances supplied the place of both history, poetry, and the drama, and were, besides this, the very oracles of morality, truth, and honour. The romance of Amadis, which has always been regarded as the most excellent of the legends of chivalry, thus obtained a very general circulation, and, as it had been translated into most of the foreign languages, its popularity was confined neither to Portugal, its native coun-

* Dr. Black.

try, nor Italy, but extended throughout Europe. "Such being the case," argues the author above alluded to, "it was as ill-judged in Bernardo to choose the fable of Amadis for the subject of his work, as it would be in a modern to versify the 'Télémaque,' or even to convert into poetry any well-known historical events. Not an incident could be altered without danger; and besides, when a work attains a certain degree of merit, it fastens itself on the imagination, and every change which is made appears a defect. No one is ignorant of the fate of amendments on well-known dramatic compositions: nor is this ill success to be attributed merely to the want of merit in such amendments, but in a high degree to the nature of the thing." "On this account," he farther observes, "and in fact from the nature of the case, Bernardo must, at that time, have failed of success, had he possessed all the ease of Ariosto, and all the grandeur of his own illustrious son."

This, however, is attributing too much importance, I conceive, to the fable. It is well known that many of the most popular works of fiction have been formed on tales already widely circulated, and the characters of which were all familiar to the public. The Amadis, it is true, was longer

and more perfect in its parts than most of the legends from which poets have delighted to draw their materials: but the manner of treating a subject in prose and verse, if the writers possess any originality whatever, is necessarily so different, that the reader of the tale in prose will discover little resemblance between the original fiction and such as it appears from the hand of the poet. Were the latter, indeed, to aim at nothing more than simply putting chapter after chapter of the romance into rhyme, all that is said by Dr. Black would hold true; but neither Bernardo nor any other writer, of even moderate talent, ever formed such a project as this. Though they have taken the fable and principal characters, they have either changed or modified the incidents, and by that means given an original interest to their works—an interest varying, of course, according to the fruitfulness of their invention, but showing how possible it is for a writer, possessing sufficient genius for the purpose, to form a poem abounding in novelty, and the most powerful attractions of fancy, though the characters he describes be as well known as the gods of Greece and Rome to the readers of Homer and Virgil.

But, even allowing that Bernardo's Amadigi

possessed little interest to persons well acquainted with the original Amadis, this would only account for its want of sudden popularity. The old romances retained their place in literature but a comparatively short period after its publication, and have now, for some ages past, been only known to the curious: had the Amadigi, therefore, principally failed of success from the unfavourableness of the subject, the lapse of a century would have placed it on an equality with the noble productions of Italy, which are read and admired by all the world. But, though the story of Amadis is now almost as little known as if it had never been written, and the Amadigi, therefore, has all the advantage it could have reaped from a fable wholly original, it has at no period obtained the attention of general readers, or falsified the remark of Tiraboschi, that there are very few persons who have had the courage to read it through. The truth is, with all the talents which Bernardo undoubtedly possessed—with great command of language—a heart breathing the most purely poetical sentiments—a fancy sufficiently active to command a succession of pleasing images, and a taste naturally acute, and rendered still more so by the study of the best authors—with all these qualifications

of a poet, and which enabled him to write smaller pieces of considerable beauty, he wanted that power of invention, which not only creates incidents, but arranges and combines them; not merely presenting to the mind objects to excite its occasional admiration, but placing it in a flowery labyrinth, along which it may wander without any interruption to its reveries, receiving, indeed, its chief delight from the very feeling that the charm of the poet is continuous; that wherever he trod became enchanted ground, and that whatever he touched was endowed with new life and glory. In the Orlando Furioso the reader feels this to be the case—like the knight who passed through forests and over floods interminable, in search of some unknown beauty, he obeys the voice of the poet, and is led on from canto to canto, in the constant expectation of some splendid discovery, and finding in every stanza he reads something new to urge him on in the pursuit. In this supreme excellence of the Orlando Furioso, the Amadigi is greatly deficient, and therefore fails in that most important requisite of a romantic poem—the power of exciting and keeping alive the attention: to which it may be added, that while Ariosto scattered his splendid flowers with the profusion of one who had inexhaustible re-

sources, Bernardo let them fall sparingly and with caution; whereas the poetry of romance, to fulfil its proper purpose, must be as rich as human invention can make it, and continually keep the mind of the reader in willing subjection by the ceaseless glow and beauty of its style.

The Floridante may be regarded as little different to the Amadigi, of which it was originally, as has been observed, only an episode. The first eight cantos are nearly the same as they appeared in connection with the longer poem—the other eleven are entirely new; but the work was never completed, and it is not easy to say whether Bernardo, long left to himself in his government of Ostiglia, would have worked with greater or less success than he did at Sorrento or Pesaro. His other poems consist of five books of "Rime," eclogues, hymns, odes, and elegies, most of which are much admired for the elegance of their style. The "Ragionamento" is a discourse on poetry, and was considered, as we have seen, worthy of great attention at the time of its appearance. The letters of Bernardo are very numerous, and though objected against on account of an occasional stiffness and pedantry in the language, they are, in general, very beautiful specimens of the epistolary style of the period,

when literary men began to regard their letters as being part of their works, and therefore, as fit for publication as their poems, or any other of their compositions. Aretino boasted of being the first whose epistles were published; and, with the exception of one or two collections, made from the letters of some religious confessors, his claim to the honour appears to have been just; and it has been already mentioned, how jealous he was of the reputation which belonged to him as a letter-writer. The epistles of Bernardo are, it will be easily conceived, as different as possible from those of the satirist, but the admirable sentiments they convey, together with the excellence of their language, render them highly pleasing as compositions, while as documents of the poet's life, and of the youth of Torquato, they are inestimably important.

Of Bernardo's numerous literary acquaintances there were several who made a conspicuous figure at the period when they lived, but their works are little known to the modern reader. Among these was Atanagi, a man of considerable ability, and whose life was as much chequered by misfortune as that of his more renowned friend Bernardo. In the early part of his career, he is said to have joined with two of his acquaintances in the design

of seeking their fortunes in common; but the enterprise failed, and Atanagi settled himself at Rome, where he lived for twenty-five years, in the constant hope that his talents would meet with the patronage they deserved, but found himself as constantly disappointed in his expectations. He was, at length, however, appointed Secretary to Giovanni Giudiccione, Governor of Marca, and he began to conceive new hopes of prosperity: but his patron died shortly after his obtaining the office, and he was again left comparatively destitute. Sickness as well as poverty now assailed him, and he was only preserved from absolute want by the liberality of the Cardinal Ridolfo Pio di Carpi, whose aid he obtained by means of a sonnet he addressed to him, beseeching his assistance. The death of Claudio Tolomei, his oldest and most tried benefactor, made him determine to leave Rome, and, in the year 1557, he set out on his return to his native province, but so weak and reduced by sickness, that he was obliged to travel in a litter. This occurred in October, and in the following December he received an invitation from the Duke of Urbino to proceed to his court, in order to assist in correcting the Amadigi. The invitation was accepted with much pleasure, and, in answer to the Duke's

letter, Atanagi expressed himself highly gratified by the honour which such a circumstance conferred upon him. The reception he met with, both from the Duke and the learned men assembled at his court, compensated, in some measure for the neglect he had experienced at Rome; and, in a poem written soon after his arrival, he paid a well-merited compliment to the liberality of his noble host:—

Anime belle, e di virtute amiche
Cui fero sdegno di fortuna offende;
Sì che veu gite povere, e mendiche
Come a lei piace, che pietà contende:
Se di por fine a le miserie antiche
Caldo desio l'afflitto cor v' accende;
Ratto correte a la gran Quercia d' oro,
Onde avrete alimento, ombra, e ristoro.
Qui regna un Signor placido, e benigno, &c.

Exalted spirits! friends of virtue, whom
Fortune with hate and fierce disdain pursues;
Who, poor and friendless, weep a hopeless doom,
The sport of her whom pity woos in vain;
If in your sorrowing hearts the thought arise,
To seek some shelter from your ancient woes,
There, where the oak of gold from dark'ning skies
A skreen affords, and aliment bestows—
There seek thy rest, for there a Prince benign
The sceptre sways———

But his anxiety to perform the work of correction to the satisfaction of Bernardo and the Duke, had so great an effect on his weak constitution, that before finishing it he was obliged to retire into the country to nurse himself. He is, however, supposed to have taken a part in seeing the poem through the press, as he accompanied Bernardo to Venice, apparently for that purpose. He continued to reside in that city during the remainder of his life, maintaining himself by correcting works for publication, and by giving critical opinions to different authors who applied to him. It is not precisely known in what year he died, but it is said to have occurred some time between 1567 and 1574.*

Sperone Speroni degli Alvarotti was another of Bernardo Tasso's distinguished contemporaries and associates. This celebrated scholar was born at Padua, April the 12th, 1500, and was a descendant of one of the most ancient families in Italy.† His abilities being discovered at an early period of his youth, he was placed under Pietro Pomponazio, the professor of philosophy in the university of Padua; but the disturbed state of the country, owing to the league of Cambray, put Pomponazio and the rest of the professors to flight, and almost

* Mazzuchelli. † Opere, Ven. 1740. Forcellini.

the only learned man who remained firm at his post was Bernardo, the father of Sperone, who taught and practised medicine with great repute and success. Bernardo, however, on the accession of Leo X. was invited to Rome, and on leaving Padua placed his son at Bologna under his former master. Sperone pursued the study as well of philosophy as of polite literature with the greatest ardour for several years, and having taken the degree of Doctor and returned to his native town, was honoured with the friendship of all the most learned men both of that city and Venice, which he repeatedly visited, and where he taught philosophy. The first interruption he appears to have received to his zealous pursuit of eminence as a scholar was his allowing himself to be persuaded by his relatives to marry. The lady chosen for him was rich and of a noble family, but she had no attractions either of mind or person sufficiently great to secure his affections, and he confessed to his friends that it was their counsel, not his choice, which made him a husband. In his thirty-second year, however, he was elected a member of the Paduan Senate, and the following year was chosen one of the sixteen who formed the supreme council. His powers as an orator had ample room

for exertion in this honourable situation, and though much occupied with public affairs, he still continued, with some few intermissions, his literary pursuits. Aristotle he studied because he best taught him to dispute acutely, to penetrate the pith of a question, and by the most compact order and the most secure conjunction to find the truth in every species of learning. "Thence he learned," it is said, "to contemplate and discourse. In Plato he next learned the majesty and copiousness of speech; in Xenophon, every kind of sweetness and a peculiarity not attained by any other author; in Athenæus and in Plutarch, he found moral precepts and copious examples." His study of both the Greek and Latin classics is also said to have been as careful as it was extensive, the making of extracts being his constant custom during the perusal of any valuable work. He also read the Fathers and "the most famous chronicles and histories, and even the worst and most despised romances, from which, he used to say, he could steal with the least danger of being discovered. From all these he formed in himself a mixed and confused mass of things, which working up after his own manner, and receiving from him a new form and colour, generated his own particular conceits, 'non più pensati,' in every kind

of learning." Convinced of the excellence of his native language, and of its fitness for any subject however dignified or important, he examined the works of the three great Florentines with profound attention, and the consequence was, it is said, that he formed for himself a style which was neither Dantesque, nor like that of Boccaccio or Petrarch, but altogether his own, and as worthy of being imitated as that of his masters; it being his favourite observation, that he liked better to be a Paduan than a bad Tuscan; "proving," observes Forcellini, "that the Lingua Volgare is a judicious compound of the finest dialects of Italy, as Greek was of the finest dialects of Greece."

Speroni's favourite species of composition was the dialogue, and his first production was the "Dialogo dell' Amore," which having been remodelled and much improved, first acquired him the esteem of Bernardo Tasso and of the Prince of Salerno. Several other productions of the same kind followed the above, and obtained general approbation by the elegance of the style and the ingenuity and truth of the sentiments.

In the year 1543, he went to Ferrara, when Pope Paul III. visited that place, and on his return was sent ambassador to Venice, where he

was attacked with an illness which nearly brought him to his grave. He was also sent as ambassador on several other occasions; and his reputation as an orator was so great, that whenever he was to address an assembly, it was necessary to choose the largest place that could be found for the meeting; while it more than once happened at Venice, that on its being known he was about to display his oratorical powers, the shops and all public places were closed, the whole population of the city rushing to hear him speak.

The publication of his tragedy of "Canace e Macareo," afforded new opportunities for the display of his talents both as a critic and a rhetorician. By many, and by Aretino among the rest, this drama was praised as a master-piece of poetry; but the opinion in its favour was by no means general, and it was attacked in some quarters with unrestrained virulence. The Academy degli Infiammati, of which Speroni was a most distinguished member, desired to give him an opportunity of defending himself and his tragedy against the abuse of his enemies, and during six successive days he delivered a series of extemporary discourses, which won the applause of a numerous and learned audience.

In the year 1559, Speroni lost his wife, and with her a great hindrance to the uninterrupted attention which he desired to give to literature. He had long desired to settle in Rome, and he now thought that he might gratify his wishes in this respect without delay. To aid him in his project, the Duke of Urbino offered to make him tutor to his son, whom he was about to place in the Court of his relative, Pope Pius IV. Some persuasion, however, was requisite, to induce him to undertake the charge; and it was not till the Duke had assured him that neither his time nor liberty should be abridged by his accepting the office, that he acceded to his wishes. The Duke's promise was not broken, and Speroni found himself treated by the Pope with the utmost respect, his lodging being, he said, better than a bishop's, and the treatment he received even more honourable than he desired. In one of his letters written about this time, he says, that he was studying the Scriptures, and using himself to a different kind of eloquence to that which he employed at Padua and Venice, where there were only men, while at Rome he had to speak with the Vicar of God, and Cardinals.* After, however, having remained some years in the Pontifical Court, and obtained knighthood,

* Opere, vol. v. Lettera 90.

he grew dissatisfied with the attentions he received, and the sickness of his daughters, whom he tenderly loved, and who had now been long married, together with some disputes with his sons-in-law, contributed still farther to make him anxious to return to his native city. Accordingly, in September 1564, he set out from Rome, and on his arrival at Padua, resolved thenceforth to lead a life of quiet and study; but he found reason to alter this determination, and in 1573, he again took up his abode in Rome. His repose was next interrupted by a very unexpected accident. Some anonymous accuser, having represented to the Inquisitor at Rome, that his Dialogues contained free and dangerous doctrines, the booksellers were prohibited from receiving or selling them in their shops. This event drove Speroni to despair, and he observed, that not being able to find quiet at Rome, he was sure he could find it in no place on earth. He, however, discovered the means of somewhat softening the prejudice excited against him, by addressing the Pope in a careful apology, and by writing some new dialogues, calculated to do away with any hurtful impression that might be conveyed by those previously written. Having done this, he once more returned to Padua, where

he died in June 1588, in the eighty-eighth year of his age, an advanced period of life for a man who had studied hard, and been long afflicted with several bodily infirmities, but which astonishes us little when we find it mentioned that he was not only temperate himself, but was the intimate friend of that great example of sobriety and longevity, Luigi Cornaro.

Lodovico Dolce, another of Bernardo's acquaintances, though deficient in those powers of mind which win immortality for their possessors, was endowed with a more than ordinary versatility of talent, and pursued every branch of literature and science with indefatigable zeal. He has been described as a poet in all the branches of the art, epic, lyric, comic, and tragic—as an orator, grammarian, historian, compiler, commentator, translator, and editor. In the last mentioned character, he for many years superintended the extensive printing establishment of the celebrated Giolito, and there was thus an additional reason, besides his own reputation as an author and scholar, for his becoming acquainted with Bernardo and the numerous literary men of his age.

One of the eight tragedies of this author, the Marianna, obtained so much applause at its first repre-

sentation, that when, at a subsequent period, it was about to be played before the Duke of Ferrara, the concourse of spectators was so great, that the performance was prevented from proceeding. But few poets possessed of any learning or ability, have written so much as Dolce, and with such little success. Of the many epic and romantic poems he composed, not one is now known to the world; and it is observed of his Æneas and Achilles, that by his injudicious imitation and partial translation of Homer and Virgil, he produced neither two translations nor two new poems. Dolce died at Venice about the year 1569, or somewhat earlier, if, as is supposed, the illness with which he was afflicted in 1566 proved fatal.

The Life of Giovan-giorgio Trissino.

Giovan-giorgio Trissino.

Giovan-giorgio Trissino was born in the city of Vicenza, on the 7th, or, according to some authors, on the 8th of July, 1478. His parents were Gasparo Trissino and Cecilia di Guilielmo Bevilacqua. The family of the Trissini was one of the most ancient and honourable of Vicenza, and Gasparo possessed a fortune sufficiently large to enable him to raise a company of three hundred soldiers at his own expense. At the head of this band, of which he was termed the Colonel, he served the Republic of Venice on many occasions of importance; but in the year 1487, having been obliged to retreat from a body of Germans under Roverado di Trento, he

took his defeat so much to heart, that he was seized with a fever which terminated his life in the thirty-ninth year of his age.

It has been stated by some writers, that the education of Giovan-giorgio was so greatly neglected in his youth, that he was two-and-twenty before he acquired any acquaintance with the classics; but this opinion, it appears, is totally incorrect, and his more careful biographers speak with confidence of his early studies.* According to their testimony, many men of great eminence were employed in his instruction, and at the proper age he was sent to Milan, where he pursued with considerable success the study of Greek, his extensive acquaintance with which language is proved by the frequent use of Greek words and idioms in his Italia Liberata. One of Trissino's fellow students at this period was the celebrated Lilio-Gregorio Giraldi, and to the learned Demetrio Calcondila these two young men, both destined to acquire such distinguished names in the Republic of letters, owed the chief instruction they received in their favourite language. Trissino retained through life the most grateful recollection of his master Demetrio, and raised an elegant monument over

* Pier. Castelli.

the spot where he was buried, in token of his affection.

Nor did he confine his attention to the lighter kinds of literature; mathematics and philosophy employed a great portion of his time, and to these studies he added that of architecture, which he pursued with so much ardour, that he wrote a treatise on the subject, and, not content with the mere theory of the science, the elegant palace, which he subsequently built in the village of Aricoli, a short distance from Vicenza, was raised entirely according to his designs. The celebrated Andrea Palladio himself is generally believed to have owed his first instructions in the art, which rendered him so conspicuous, to Trissino. In the life of the architect, by Paolo Giraldo, it is said that "Andrea, already become a sculptor, having contracted a close intimacy with Trissino, his compatriot, and one of the first literary men of the age, was found by the poet to be a youth of great ability, and much inclined to the mathematical sciences; to encourage which disposition he explained Vitruvius to him, and took him with him to Rome three times, where he measured and designed many of the most admired structures which still remain of antient Rome." Palladio was not

ungrateful for the assistance thus rendered him in his youth, and has left honourable mention of Trissino in the preface to his celebrated work on the orders of architecture.

In 1504, Trissino married Giovanna Tiene, a lady of noble family, and his townswoman. By her he had two sons, Francesco, who died young, and Giulio, who entered the church, and was made Arch-Priest of the cathedral of Vicenza, but was the cause of much uneasiness to his father. Giovanna did not live long after giving birth to these sons, and her death plunged Trissino into the deepest affliction. Unable to endure his home under the first impressions of distress, he hastened to Rome, and, as a farther means of lightening his melancholy, began the composition of his tragedy of "Sofonisba." This occupation of his mind, and the distinctions he enjoyed in the Court of Leo X., filled with men of letters, afforded him speedy relief, and after a short residence in the Pontifical capital, he resolved to escape from the unsettled mode of life to which it exposed him, and return to Vicenza.

He arrived in his native city towards the end of 1514, or the beginning of 1515, but to his great surprise and discomfiture, he found his revenues

endangered by the refusal of some neighbouring districts to pay certain imposts on their lands which had been granted to the family of the Trissini. By the great interest, however, which he possessed at Rome, and the consequent interference of the Pontiff, he obtained the restitution of his rights, and was enabled to compose his mind to study; but he had scarcely resumed his former mode of life, when Leo, desirous of securing the services of a man so well known for his ability, sent him on a mission to the Emperor Maximilian, after seeing whom he was to proceed to the King of Denmark.

The manner in which he performed these embassies increased his reputation with the Pontiff, and acquired him the distinguished regard of the Emperor. So gratified was the latter with his conversation and conduct that he is said to have bestowed upon him many marks of favour, and among others, to have given him the privilege of adding the golden fleece to his arms, unless the grant of this privilege be ascribed, as is more frequently done, to Charles V. The object of this mission, by which our author acquired so much honour, was to consult with the Emperor respecting a general peace, and a confederation of the

great European powers against the threatening force of the Ottoman. As soon as the discussions respecting this important business were concluded, Trissino prepared for prosecuting his journey into Denmark, but Maximilian resisted this intention, expressing his wish that he would return to the Pope as his own ambassador, and desire his holiness to assist him in forming a league between himself and the Kings of England and Spain, against any attempts of the French on Italy. Trissino assented to the Emperor's wishes, and bore a letter to the Pope, in which Maximilian excused himself for sending the ambassador back before he proceeded to Denmark, on the plea that the business was of immediate and urgent necessity.

No sooner had the poet completed this affair than Leo sent him as his nuncio to the Republic of Venice, to press upon that State the necessity of joining in a crusade against the Turks. While executing his public functions, Trissino also found himself again involved in a law-suit with his refractory tributaries, who trusted to the protection of Venice in their refusal to pay the tithes due to the estate of our author: but, while in the midst of the process, he received a letter from Bembo, the Pope's secretary, desiring his imme-

diate return to Rome, and such was his attention to the calls of his master that he suffered no cares of his own to interfere with public business. He, however, returned to Venice after a brief absence, and continued, it appears, to pursue the same objects as before his recall to Rome. Nor were these claims upon his attention sufficient to make him forget his literary designs. While pressing his own suit before the Venetian judges, and using all his skill as an ambassador to obtain the concurrence of the Doge in the proposed crusade, he continued to study the rules of the Grecian drama with profound attention, and at length finished his tragedy of Sofonisba, which, though not exhibiting either that power which is necessary to dramatic composition, or that grace and sweetness which form the attraction of poetry of a lower species, was a production of no little merit, considering the state of the drama in Italy when it appeared, and that it was the first regular tragedy of which that country could boast. Leo was greatly delighted with its strict adherence to the rules of art, regarded it as one of the noblest ornaments of the Italian language, and at one time intended, it is said, to have it represented with the greatest splendour that could accompany a scenic display.

The praise, however, of Leo, though a man of consummate taste, was not such as would stamp a tragedy with the seal of immortality, and the Sofonisba, like the poems of Bembo, has been condemned to enjoy the applause only of a few cold and obscure critics.

On the death of Leo X. in December 1521, Trissino returned to Vicenza, and again freed himself entirely to the enjoyment of literary leisure; the first fruits of which was a canzone in honour of Isabella, Marchioness of Mantua, who in return sent him a pressing invitation to her court, which was repeated the following year, with the intimation that she desired him to undertake the education of her son. It is not known whether Trissino accepted this honourable offer, the letter containing which is dated July 19, 1522, but it seems probable that he did not, as in the May of the following year he was elected by the magistrates of Vicenza to congratulate the new Doge of Venice, the celebrated Andrea Gritti, on his entering upon office. In the same year also, the Cardinal Giulio de' Medici was advanced to the Papacy, and Trissino, who was his personal friend, wrote him a congratulatory epistle, and also composed a canzone in his praise. These marks of attention were re-

warded by an immediate invitation to the Pontifical Court, on receiving which, the poet without delay set off for Rome, and was received there with the affection which he had been accustomed to enjoy in the Court of Leo X.

The following year he published his tragedy, and, having given this to the world, he turned his attention to a subject which has engaged the abilities of many distinguished scholars in almost every country of Europe. Considering the Italian alphabet not sufficiently copious to express the sounds of the voice, he had for some time past thought it necessary to employ some of those belonging to the Greek, and to convince the learned men of his time that he was correct in his ideas, he wrote to the Pontiff on the subject.

"During the many years," says he, "most Blessed Father, that I have spent in considering the pronunciation of Italian, and in comparing it with the written language, I have thought the latter to be weak and faulty, and not adapted to express it. It therefore appeared to me necessary to add some letters to the alphabet, by means of which our pronunciation might in some measure be improved, and this, with the aid of God, I did, as may be seen in my Poetics and Treatise on Grammar.

But since these two little works are for certain reasons not yet published, and since, urged by certain friends, I have begun to make these new letters known, and to employ them, I have thought it right to explain the nature of them at the same time that I bring them into use; in order that they may be known by those who desire to use them, and exposed to those who wish to judge them. And it has appeared to me that I ought to publish them under the name of your Blessedness, because the first time these letters were used, they were placed in a canzone dedicated to you; and because moreover, it being the universal opinion that under the Pontificate of your Holiness, not only the Roman Church, but the whole Christian Republic, will receive light, order, and increase, it appeared to me most proper that under your auspicious name the Italian pronunciation should be in some degree illustrated and enlarged." He then proceeds to the exposition of his theory, and observes that the letters for which he first claims admission into the Italian alphabet are the Greek ε and ω, there being of the vowels *e* and *o* two pronunciations, for the expression of which a single character is insufficient. He adds, that the proper application of these new signs would wonderfully assist towards the attain-

ment of the Tuscan and Court (Cortigiana) pronunciation, the most admirable, without doubt, in Italy. The next character he introduces is the *z*, which he observes has two sounds, sometimes that of a *g*, at others that of *c*, and completes his design by proposing to prevent the confusion resulting from the vowels *i* and *u* being sometimes used as consonants, by introducing the *j* and *v*, thus on the whole increasing the alphabet by the addition of five new characters; the three first-mentioned being of the highest importance, and the last two useful, but of less consequence. Before concluding the epistle, he anticipates the objections which are likely to be made to his proposed improvement, and in respect to those who should oppose his theory on the plea of its being an innovation, he inquires whether they wear their clothes of the same fashion, or do any thing as their ancestors did? innovation, he observes, being constantly made, according to present necessity and the wants of the time; and if these changes take place in laws and customs, why is there to be no change made in writing, by which we teach and preserve our thoughts? the more especially, as great alterations have actually been made in it since former times, as any one may perceive, who will ex-

amine any ancient document. In regard to those who should object that his object might be attained more easily by means of accents, he shows that they are less intelligible, more liable to confusion, and not of a nature to remove the defect complained of.

He was thus the first to bring the question before the public; but the same idea, it appears, had some few years before been started by the academicians of Siena, and though his theory was praised for its ingenuity, and he had the merit of priority in publishing it, he obtained little encouragement, and had, in the words of Castelli, more flatterers than followers. The letter had also been but a short time in print, when a host of opponents arose, who treated the writer with little courtesy. Among these, one of the most conspicuous was Lodovico Martelli, who asserted that there was no need of the additional characters, and that it would be injuring the simplicity of the Tuscan language to employ them. Another of his critics was Firenzuola, a monk of Vallombrosa, who accused him of being a plagiarist, and asserted that he had stolen the idea from some young Florentines; while a third found fault with him for not having done sufficient. In answer to these attacks, Tris-

sino published his "Dubbi Grammaticali," and a short time after, a dialogue entitled "Il Castellano." Nor did he want supporters either in his own or a subsequent age; the learned Maffei speaks of his theory with the highest approbation, and Fontanini says, that he deserves to be called the second Cadmus. The most striking testimony, however, in his favour is that, though the other letters which he proposed to introduce, never obtained a place in the Italian alphabet, the *j*, the *v*, and the *z*, almost unknown till his time in that language, have been ever since recognized as a part of its elements.

In the preface to the Dubbi Grammaticali he says, "I have always esteemed the endeavour to render assistance to others, the finest and the most honourable of human designs, and have always, to the best of my weak ability, exercised myself in it. Nor did I for any other reason add the new characters to the alphabet, than to be useful to those who are studying our language; and although some, stimulated either by the desire of glory or by envy, have written against me, I am not willing to cease from pursuing, to the best of my power, so excellent and noble a subject; begging my adversaries, at the same time, to accept my thanks for

having written against me, as they have thereby tended to make the nature and utility of these letters better understood, and the real state of the question better known, and had they convicted me of error, I should most willingly have submitted to their correction. But since I have been condemned by them for what I ought not, and been absolved where I merited blame, I have therefore taken upon myself to correct and remove the errors into which I have partially fallen."

From these literary pursuits his attention was again called in 1525, by the posture of public affairs. Francis I. having been taken prisoner at Pavia, the Pope soon after found it necessary to enter into negotiations, which the talents and long experience of Trissino rendered him peculiarly qualified to conduct. As ambassador to the Republic of Venice and the Emperor Charles V., he again exercised the skill in managing affairs of importance which had secured him such honourable notice in the early part of his career, and Clement continued to regard him with the esteem due to so old and faithful a servant of the Princes of the Church.

The next five years was a troubled period for all who were in any way engaged in public affairs,

and there can be little doubt that Trissino experienced a full share of the alarm so general in 1527, when the head of the Catholic Church was torn from his palace, and made a prisoner by the arm of a temporal sovereign. Certain it is, that when the storm passed away, he was among the first who participated in the returning prosperity of the Pontiff; and on the arrival of Charles at Bologna, in order to be solemnly crowned King of Lombardy and Emperor of the Romans, our poet was in attendance on Clement, and at the ceremony of the coronation bore his train, an honour, it is said, never conceded but to persons of the highest distinction.

The favour which he thus for so many years experienced at the hands of Leo X. and Clement VII. affords a very striking proof of his talents both as a scholar and a man of business; for with the former of these Pontiffs the chief recommendation to notice was learning and literary ability, and the latter was placed during his Pontificate in so many hazardous situations, that it must have been an extraordinary degree of confidence in Trissino's good sense which induced him to trust so many negotiations to his superintendence. It was no doubt owing to the close connection which existed on these

accounts between the poet and the Papal Court, that an opinion gained ground in a subsequent age that he was a churchman, and enjoyed numerous ecclesiastical preferments. Voltaire, whom M. Ginguené convicts of great carelessness in one sentence, but praises for historical accuracy in another, terms Trissino an archbishop, and he has been followed, it seems, by several other writers, who have incautiously adopted his statements. But whatever were the rewards bestowed on our author for his zealous attachment to Leo and Clement, they were certainly not bishoprics; and it is reported that the former even offered in vain to make him a Cardinal, Trissino preferring to take a second wife, to being raised to the high rank thus within his attainment.

The fatigue he suffered at Bologna had a very injurious effect on his health, and he began to find it necessary to be more careful in the expenditure of strength. He was arrived at the age of fifty-two; had passed an active, and in some respects perhaps, a laborious life, and though neither his years were sufficiently numerous, nor the cares he had experienced of a nature to injure the health considerably, yet to a man desirous of preserving himself from the worst infirmities of age, his present

condition afforded a warning that it was time to retire from the bustle of public life.

Trissino, who appears to have possessed more prudence than the generality of his brother bards, lost not a day in putting the resolution to which he had come in execution, and, taking his leave of the Pope, he set out from Bologna for his seat at Vicenza. His first care on reaching home was to terminate the vexatious law-suits which had so long troubled his mind, and after some few months farther litigation, he succeeded in finally settling the dispute with his refractory neighbours. But cares of a different and still more harassing nature speedily followed. His second wife was Bianca, a daughter of Niccolò Trissino, and the widow of Alvise Trissino. By the poet she had a son and a daughter, and by her former husband a son who was still living, and her maternal anxiety for whose welfare had suffered no diminution from her second marriage. Giulio, Trissino's eldest son, who was now Arch-Priest of the cathedral church of Vicenza, was, notwithstanding his ecclesiastical profession, infected with the most violent jealousy of his brother-in-law, and, considering the affectionate conduct of Bianca towards her son as an injury to himself, he lost no opportunity of thwarting her

designs. The lady, probably, was little inclined to suffer the asperity of Giulio's behaviour unresented, and thus the unfortunate Trissino was placed between two fires, which only seemed to burn the quicker the more he endeavoured to extinguish them, and from which with all his experience and political skill he found himself unable to escape.

Things remained in this state for some years; the poet suffering the greatest domestic uneasiness, while his townsmen and others continued to manifest towards him all the respect due to his talents and experience, sending him as their representative before the Venetian Senate, and trusting to him the most important of their negotiations. The same respect attended him in his literary character. The celebrated Rucellai had been for many years one of his most intimate friends, and it was the urgent wish of that learned man, on his death-bed, that Trissino should undertake the preparation of his unpublished poems for the press: this request would have been attended to by our author with a zeal proportioned to the strength of his long standing friendship, but Rucellai died before he could make his wish known, and could only direct that his poem on Bees should be dedicated to Trissino.

In the year 1540 he lost his wife Bianca, and it might have been supposed that the strife which had for so long a time disturbed his quiet would then cease; but instead of this being the case, the jealousy and rancour of his children were increased, and he found that his admonition and authority were both alike despised. Giulio set no bounds to his passion, and the unfortunate father saw himself on the point of being deprived of a large part of his fortune in a suit instituted against him by his son. Unable to endure any longer the strife and ingratitude of his family, he determined to leave Vicenza, and seek a home at a sufficient distance from the scene of his present troubles to save him from any farther annoyance. In conformity with this design he retired to Murano, a short distance from Venice: soon after arriving at which place, he found himself sufficiently composed to resume his literary occupations, and sit down to the completion of his celebrated, though not popular epic, the "Italia Liberata da i Goti." He had begun this work some time before the present period, and it was not finished till he had expended on its composition twenty years, a period which, in these fruitful days, when the mind is expected to be at least as productive as it is

active, seems greatly too long for the production of a single work, but which shrinks into insignificance when it is remembered that the same time was exhausted by Sannazzaro on the De Partu Virginis.

The Italia Liberata contributes very strongly to mark the character of the age when it appeared. We discover throughout that period a tendency to root out the precious seeds with which Nature herself seems to have sown the soil of Italy, a soil which, had it not been picked and cleared by the nice hand of critics at one time, and trampled under foot by the war-steeds of tyrants at another, would have by this time been overrun, even to an excess of beauty, by flowers of all forms and hues, and whose rich odours would have now filled the intellectual atmosphere of Europe, as they did that of England in the spring and summer days of our poetry —in those of Chaucer and Shakspeare. Ariosto was, as we have seen, persuaded to write in Latin; Bernardo Tasso unwillingly composed a romance instead of a classical epic; Sannazza thought his fame must perish if it depended on poetry in his native language; and Pietro Bembo had the same idea:—but it was reserved for Trissino to show the

learned spirit of the age in the most decided manner. The other writers who lived with, or shortly preceded him, had hesitated between the ancient and the modern language, and, when they adopted the former, it was from the high opinion they had formed of its powers, and from a notion that they could express their thoughts more forcibly and clearly by its idioms than by those of their native tongue. Adopting the language, they almost necessarily adopted the forms of classical composition; and the works, they thus produced, seemed rather like newly-transplanted trees, than as if they had been long naturalized to the soil. But Trissino, instead of taking the language, and therefore the forms and measures of ancient poetry, was sufficiently imbued with classical learning to reject the language in which it was conveyed, and, unlike his timid predecessors, determined to be a classic in his own tongue. This was the perfect triumph of art and learning over nature, and, like all such triumphs, won a partial and momentary applause, and was the forgotten. The Italia Liberata was a prodigious effort of ingenuity, for ingenuity may, perhaps, be considered the imitative faculty employed in copying mere human models, while

genius is the same faculty working after the beau-ideals of the mind, or the most perfect forms that exist in nature.

The poet, however, having completed and cautiously corrected the first nine books of his epic, sent them to press, and they appeared at Rome in the year 1547. Trissino lost no time in forwarding a copy of the work, as far as it was printed, to the Emperor Charles V., who, on receiving it, expressed the highest satisfaction at the present, and signified his approbation of the poem itself by desiring the author to let him have the remainder as speedily as possible. Trissino was in no slight degree gratified by the Emperor's compliments, and immediately prepared to complete the remaining books, his success with those already printed having the effect of stimulating him to still greater care in polishing and correcting those not yet published. By the following year the remaining books were printed, and he instantly forwarded them, with all the anxiety of a young author eager to reap the first harvest of fame, to the Emperor. Praise as flattering as that bestowed on the former occasion was the reward of the poet's toils, or, as it might, perhaps, be said with more truth, of his fidelity and homage to the imperial critic.

But, notwithstanding the time and pains which had been employed upon the Italia Liberata da i Goti—notwithstanding the reputation already enjoyed by its author; and though, above all, he had been the friend of successive Pontiffs, and was a favourite with the Emperor, the poem did not escape the attacks of many severe critics, some of whom, that nothing might escape them, began with the title, which, on the one hand, was said to be too long, and on the other, not sufficiently clear. It was next objected that the Dialogues were wearisome and badly managed, it being an offence against probability to represent persons making long and formal speeches in the midst of battles. Another objection was in respect to the time which the action occupied; it would have been better, it was remarked, if the story had commenced at a later period of the war, that is, when Belisarius arrived at Rome, or, at least, in Italy; and also if it had been kept free from the love adventures of Justinian, the recital of which was unworthy of the main subject. The last objection has given rise to some controversy among Italian critics. It having been observed by Fontanini* that Trissino inserted some things in his

* Bibliotheca della Eloquent. Ital.

poem which merited great censure, but afterwards, like a good Christian, being convinced of his error, amended or changed the verses, his annotator remarks, that he spent a long time in endeavouring to discover where the changes above-mentioned were made; and for that purpose examined a great variety of copies, but all in vain. "Nor should I ever," he continues, "have been able to satisfy myself had not Signor Giuseppe Farsetti lent me a copy which contained the corrected passages, and the whole of which, to my no little surprise, were no more than three, the alterations in which consisted of only a few words." It would have been infinitely better, concludes Zeno, if, as a good Christian and Catholic, Trissino had not scandalized the Church by calumniating the holy Pontiff Silverius, as he does in his sixteenth book.*

Crescimbeni is another of the writers who most severely criticises our poet, observing that he is much too exact or minute in his minor descriptions, especially in that of Justinian's dress, all the parts of which he mentions, and in the exact order in which they were put on. Other writers have made the same objection, adding, with great just-

* Apos. Zeno. Note al Fontanini.

ness, that the energy required in an epic poem is by no means to be acquired by an exact description of objects not great or excellent in themselves. Giraldi Cintio, from whom Castelli quotes this observation, remarks also that the age in which Homer wrote, the custom of the times, and the singular power evinced by that divine poet, made such things tolerable in him; but that Trissino, by imitating him in these respects, did no otherwise than "select the refuse from the gold of Homer, imitate his vices, and gather together all that which good judges would wish to be rid of—by which he showed little wisdom." To these observations may also be added that of Bernardo Tasso, who remarks in one of his letters, that "if Trissino had been as judicious in selecting a subject worthy of twenty years' labour, as he was extensively learned, he would have seen that to write as he did, was to write for the dead."

The objections thus made against the Italia Liberata, appear to be so well founded, that they have been permitted to determine its fate with little contradiction. The learned Maffei, in his preface to the edition of our author's works, judiciously avoids entering into the subject, and only observes that many objections are made to the

poem, which he shall leave for those to discuss who treat of the various sorts of poetry. "I will only say," he continues, "that for a composition to merit praise, it is not necessary that it should be free from every defect; and I will also say, that it would be useless to reason on many of the objections with those who have no taste for the antique, or for Greek. Torquato Tasso, indeed, who speaks of it in many parts of his prose works, did not approve of the author's having followed Homer in certain obsolete and obscure customs; or of his having taken too much matter, that is the whole Gothic war, in which he did not follow Homer. But when he speaks of unity of action in the third book of his Treatise on Heroic Poetry, he did not subscribe to the vulgar opinion, but observed the superiority of Trissino in this respect to Ariosto." The passage alluded to by Maffei is as follows: "Ariosto who, forsaking the example of the ancient writers and the rules of Aristotle, has comprehended many and various actions in his poem, is read and re-read by people of every age, and of either sex; he is known in all languages, pleases all, is praised by all, lives and continually grows young again in fame, and takes his glorious flight through all the languages of the world; but Trissino,

on the contrary, who resolved upon religiously imitating and observing the poems of Homer and the precepts of Aristotle, mentioned by few, read scarcely by any, mute in the theatre of the world, and dead to the light, is hardly to be found buried in the library of a man of letters."*

After all that has been said by these several critics, the chief fault of which Trissino stands accused, is a fault of judgment rather than a failure of poetic ability, and there can be little doubt that if either Ariosto or Tasso had allowed himself to be led away by the idle ambition of writing a classical epic in blank verse, neither of them would have escaped the fatal influence which such a radical error in the design must have had upon their genius. No comparison can of course be made between Trissino and these great men, but the orator of Vicenzo had sufficient poetry both in his heart and mind to save him, had he not so erred in judgment, from the fate which has attended his Italia Liberata, and he affords us one of the many instances which exist in literary history, of men of the best judgment in other things, making woful mistakes in their choice of subjects, or in their manner of treating them. Almost the whole of Trissino's works, indeed, were experiments on public taste;

* Del Poema Eroico, lib. iii.

the period when they appeared tempted, perhaps, and authorized such experiments; but to secure their success a most penetrating as well as solid judgment was required, and great power of execution to prevent novelty of form from appearing crude and unnatural.

While Trissino was thus occupied with his poem and the critics who attacked it, his son Giulio was pressing his claims upon the estate with unceasing resolution. Irritated, as was natural, at this treatment, he made a will, by which he disinherited Giulio, and made Ciro the sole heir to his fortune; but he had scarcely finished the arrangements respecting this testament, when he heard to his surprise and indignation that a sentence had been passed against him in the court where the cause was tried, and thus found himself deprived of a great part of his possessions. Full of resentment, and disgusted with his country, where he felt that he had only met with strife and injury, he immediately set out for Trent, where the Emperor was then staying, and having explained to him the circumstances in which he was placed, proceeded to Mantua, and thence, notwithstanding his age and infirmities, by rapid journeys to Rome, where he met with the same honour and regard he

had experienced in former years, and after a brief enjoyment of the consolation thus afforded him, he died lamented in the year 1550.

Trissino merits a distinguished station among the learned men of his age. His acquaintance with the classics was extensive, and in his habits of study he was patient and laborious. Before writing the Italia Liberata, he read, it is said, every work that could be procured which embraced any notice of the classical ages, or served to illustrate the history or manners of the times; and, in speaking of his anxiety to make his treatise on poetry as useful and correct as possible, he says, "I have spared no fatigue; besides the Volgare Eloquenza of Dante, and the Regole di Antonio di Tempo, I have read almost all the ancient Trovatori, Sicilian, Italian, Provençal, and Spanish, which could be obtained; and I shall think little of this fatigue if I may thereby have satisfied those many ingenious foreigners who are desirous of information on the subject."* Most of his works bear evident signs of the care and study with which he wrote, and the consideration he obtained in the learned Court of Leo X. is a sufficient proof that he could employ it as an accomplishment, and enrich his

* De la Poetica. Opere, ii. p. 92.

conversation as well as books by the erudition he possessed.

Of the Italia Liberata and the Sofonisba, it only remains to be said that they were the first Italian works written in blank verse.* His other poetical productions consist of sonnets and canzoni, of which the former were described by a contemporary writer as clear, sententious, and pathetic, while the latter obtained attention as presenting the first imitation of the Pindaric Ode seen in Italian: "As each stanza," says he in his Poetics, "ought to have the same form, and the same quality, and quantity of verses as the first, I have therefore, in imitation of Pindar, who makes the strophe and antistrophe alike, and then introduces the epode of a different structure, composed canzoni, which have the first two stanzas similar in structure, in the manner of the strophe and antistrophe, and the third different to them, like the epode, with which third stanza agrees the sixth, as the fourth and fifth with the first and with the second; and in this order, three stanzas agreeing with three stanzas, to the end of the canzone."† Besides these poems, he also wrote a comedy, entitled "I Similimi," an imitation of the Menemmi of Plautus. It was dedicated to

* Zeno al Fon. † Opere, vol. ii. p. 70.

the Cardinal Farnese, in his epistle to whom he gives his reasons for undertaking the work. "Having," he says, "composed in the Italian language, a tragedy and an heroic poem, which, the former imitating by representation, the latter by enunciation, treat of the actions and the manners of great and illustrious men, and convey instruction by exciting pity and terror, I formed the idea of adventuring upon the third species of poetry, that is comedy, which treats of the actions and manners of the middle and lower classes, and performs the work of instruction by means of ridicule and laughter. And as in my tragedy and epic I sought to observe the rules laid down by Aristotle, and exemplified in Homer, Sophocles, and the other best poets, so in comedy I have desired to preserve the manner of Aristophanes, that is, of the old comedy. Having, therefore, taken a happy invention of Plautus, I have changed the names and added characters, and in some parts altered the order, and introduced the chorus, and having thus adapted it to my wishes, venture to send it forth in this new dress."

The prose works of our author, besides those already mentioned, are the Poetics, above alluded to, and which contain much useful ob-

servation, as well as technical criticism. It was regarded both by contemporary and succeeding scholars as a work of profound erudition and critical skill. His other productions in prose consist of his Oration addressed to Andrea Gritti, two Dialogues, under the titles Il Castelano and I Ritratti, and an Epistle on the life which ought to be led by a widow. The former of the dialogues was on the subject of his new letters; the latter, I Ritratti, or The Portraits, is one of the most elegant specimens of this species of writing in existence, and I cannot, perhaps, give a better idea of Trissino's style than by presenting the reader with a specimen from this essay.

The author introduces the dialogue by informing the reader that when Lucio Pompilio was at Ferrara, and in the house of Margarita Cantelma Duchess of Sora, he was requested by a brilliant assembly of young and noble persons to repeat a conversation he once had at Milan with Cardinal Bembo and Vicenzio Macro. Pompilio having been, it is said, to visit Demetrio Calcondile, and found the Cardinal at the house of the venerable old man, was returning in company with the learned churchman, when they unexpectedly met Macro. Perceiving that something particular occupied his

mind, they inquired why he was so abstracted, and found to their surprise that though a philosopher, he had been thrown into this state of wonder by some beautiful woman whom he had just seen at church. Macro was immediately questioned as to her name, and similar particulars, but he knew nothing of her, except that she was from Ferrara, which he had learnt from hearing some one in the crowd say, "such are the beauties of Ferrara." The curiosity of the Cardinal and Pompilio being excited, it was resolved that Macro should picture the lady's person and appearance in the best manner that could be done by words. This he consented to attempt, but before beginning his portrait, he inquired of the Cardinal whether he knew the most celebrated beauties of Vicenza, Florence, and other cities, to which Bembo having answered in the affirmative, mentioning Trissino's wife as one of the chief beauties of Vicenza, Macro said he should do as Zeuxis did, and take what was fairest in each to form his picture.

"'I will first take,' said Macro, 'the head of Ericina, on which the locks are neither too full nor too thin; the measured beauty of her forehead and the arching of her lovely eyebrows, and likewise the eyes, humid with that gladness and

delight which sparkle in them, blended with a certain degree of majesty; and these we will leave as Nature formed them; next we may observe the exquisite junction of the soft arms to the delicate hands, and that of the hands to those long fingers which taper so insensibly to the end, and are encircled with splendid rings. The cheeks, then, and those parts which are confined by the hair, and that which circumscribes the eyes, we will take from Vicenza and from La Trissina; and also the most benignant and sweet smile which makes us forget our wonder, and the holy modesty, and the gravity of motion, and the gracefulness of attitude, these we will take from her. Next, the nose of admirable measure and becoming quality, and the well-formed chin, and the tenderness of those parts which proceed from it, as the cheeks and those under it which are on the confines of the neck, these Spinola shall give. But the sweet and most lovely mouth, and the delicate lips, and the equal and well-proportioned neck, and the full size of the person, which neither extends itself into a disagreeable height nor descends into littleness, these are afforded by the Countess. The bosom moderately full, and the squareness of the shoulders, and their largeness a little increasing towards the neck, with

which they are most exquisitely united, these may be taken from Clemenza de' Pacci; and also the age, which, according to my judgment, should not much exceed twenty-three, would be, it seems, that of these ladies.'—'Truly,' said Bembo, 'this your portrait is a very beautiful and excellent one.' —'It will appear still more so when it is finished,' replied Macro.—'Have you not completed it then?' said Bembo, again: 'what can be wanting when every thing has been so punctually mentioned?'— 'Much is wanting,' said Macro, 'if colours are as necessary to beauty as I believe them to be.'"

Having rejected both particular ladies and the most splendid painters as guides in this respect, Macro takes Petrarch as the best, from whom, he says, he will first paint the hair, making it, as the poet did, 'of fine gold, and than gold brighter;' then the face, fair as the pure snow, or rather like white roses mixed with red in a golden vase; next the lips, like vermilion roses; the eyebrows like ebony; and the soft bright eyes like two most lucid stars, and with an expression which 'can make the night clear and the day obscure, and honey bitter and wormwood sweet.'

'Such,' continues the speaker, 'is this marvellous lady, as our description and the noble poet

have depicted her. But that, above all, which distinguishes her figure, is the grace which accompanies it; all the graces and the loves flock dancing round her, adorning even her slightest movement in such a manner as cannot be described either by speech or any other human means, and can scarcely be conceived by the mind.'—'A most divine thing, truly,' said Bembo, 'is this which you describe, and which might be termed the rarest gift Heaven has ever bestowed on the race of mortals; but I hope you will not refuse to tell us what her dress is, and in what manner you beheld her.' —'She wore her hair loose,' said Macro, 'and so that her ringlets fell carelessly on her white and delicate shoulders; but over her head was thrown a silken tawny-coloured net, which seemed of wonderfully fine workmanship, and the knots of which were of the finest gold, and through the meshes of this net her locks might be seen scintillating like the rays of the sun. On the summit of her forehead, where the hair divides, she wore a most beautiful and brilliant ruby, from which hung a very large and lucid pearl; on her neck also she wore a string of very large, equal, and most splendid pearls, which, hanging on each side of her bosom, descended almost to the waist. Her robe

was of rich black velvet, loaded with gold ornaments, so well placed and so exquisitely wrought, that the artificers seemed, in order to adorn her person, to have contended with Nature herself. This lady I saw enter the cathedral, having just, as it seemed, left her carriage, to pray; she had a book in her hand, open at the part from which she had been reading, and she was speaking with one of her attendants, but not so that I could hear what she said; she, however, smiled as she spoke, and showed between her rosy lips a row of the whitest and most equal teeth, which might be compared to the driven snow, as Messer Cino da Pistoia said, 'fra le rose vermiglie d'ogni tempo.'

'Proceed no farther, Messer Vicenzio,' said Bembo, 'I know whom you are describing, both from what you now say, and from having before mentioned her country, it is the Signora Marchesana of Mantua.' Having expressed his admiration of this paragon of personal beauty, Bembo continues to observe that that of her mind and heart is equally perfect. 'But I could name ladies,' says he, 'who, being very beautiful in their persons, obscure and debase their beauty by the lowness and vulgarity of their minds, so as to produce in us a feeling of hate, and such women appear to me like the

ancient temples of Egypt, the building of which was fair and beautiful, and composed of most precious stone, and ornamented in a sumptuous manner with gold, but the gods who inhabited them were only apes, or oxen, or cats, or other base animals.'

This observation of Bembo induced Macro to request that he would draw him a picture of an intellectual and moral beauty, as he had done of one in form and external appearance. The Cardinal consented, saying, that he must draw his help neither from poets nor painters, but from philosophers. 'First, then,' continued he, 'I will make her voice, as Petrarch says, clear, sweet, angelic, and divine, and her language far sweeter than that which proceeded from the mouth of the old Pastor in Homer—and, that every thing may be particularly noted, the tone of the voice is not so low as to be too feminine or shrill, but it is sweet and tender, like that of a lad not yet arrived at youth; and that tone most sweetly insinuating itself into the ear, begets a certain delightful echo in it, which, even when the voice ceases, rests softly there, and preserves some relics of the discourse, and a certain sweetness full of persuasion in the mind. But, when it is heard in song, and especially when accompanied by the lute, it would bewilder with

astonishment Orpheus and Amphion themselves, who could make inanimate things obey their song; and I am confident that neither of them knew so well how to preserve the harmony, so that the rythm be never lost, but kept strictly marked by the elevation and depression of the song, always in accordance with the lute—the tongue, and the hands, and the inflections of the melody being all in union with each other. Wherefore, I am sure, that if you heard her sing, you would be like those who heard the Syrens, and would lose all thoughts of your country and home, and that it would make its way into your ears, though they were closed with wax. In one word, this song is such as is to be expected to pass through such lips and teeth as have been described. With regard to her speech, it is neither purely of her own country, nor purely Tuscan, but composed of that which is most beautiful both in the one and the other, and thus a mixed and most sweet language; it has in itself some graces and expressions beyond description pleasing and apt, and which, used by her, never startle, but always delight; and by this you may judge how admirably her erudition is combined with genius. This is the description of her voice and singing, but it is much

inferior to the reality. I will next form the rest, since I do not desire to follow your example, and compose one beauty from many, which, perhaps, is less difficult and more convenient for painters, sculptors, and others; but I wish for every virtue of the mind to draw a portrait as like the original as possible.'—'Truly,' said Macro, 'you return us a fair measure, and I pray you do so, since nothing can be more grateful or delightful.'—'Since, then,' resumed Bembo, 'erudition is necessarily the majestic guide to all noble operations of the mind, I will make a picture which shall present great variety and many figures, such as your imagination probably, will not be able to surpass. We will describe her, then, as possessing all the gifts of Castalia and Parnassus; not one power only as that of Calliope, Clio, Polymnia, or the others, but those of all the Muses together, and even of Mercury and Apollo; and by all those things which the poets ornament in verse, historians write in prose, and philosophers harmonize in the one and in the other —by all these is our picture adorned, and not merely superficially coloured, but deeply and profoundly tinted. And, above all, she will be found to delight in poetry, and to dwell much upon it, which is as it should be, she being of the same

country as Virgil. She is such, in a word, that if all the celebrated poetesses of Greece were combined in one, that one would not be comparable to her.'

The speaker next describes the several moral virtues which are to adorn the lady whose portrait he is painting; in respect to her religion, he says, 'She does not pass all the day with monks and friars, but, leaving them to pray in their cells, she hears the mass and other offices with most profound devotion, and observes the fasts and almsgivings, and other things ordained by the Church; and also preserves a firm and inviolable faith, accompanied with a most holy attention to her promises and a uniform truth of language, a false word never escaping her lips; besides which, she cherishes a deep piety and tenderness towards her country, and towards her father and mother while living, and when they are no more, towards her brothers. We may also add, that she desires that every one may receive rewards and honours according to his dignity and merit, and that the holiness of the laws may be preserved, in order that the virtuous may be rewarded and the wicked punished. And with regard to her liberality, of which she sets so singular an example, who knows so well how to

spend her wealth on proper objects and where it is most useful to spend it? This her liberality may be clearly perceived from her splendid vestments, the magnificent furniture of her house, and its noble, delightful, and, as it were, divine apartments, with the charming chambers full of the rarest books, the choicest paintings, marvellous specimens of ancient and modern sculpture, and camei, intagli, medals and gems. But her liberality is still better shown in the good she does to others, and not in merely doing it, but in doing it wisely. It is very little that she gives to buffoons and mountebanks, and such like rabble; her charity is bestowed on good and virtuous persons, to whom she gives that in which they stand most in need, whether it be money, food, or clothing. And when want presses she succours them at the moment, and gives so largely that she dissipates all their care with regard to the support of life; on which account her name has been consecrated by many both in verse and prose to immortality, and will be in the mouths of people thousands and thousands of years hence.'

Some other particulars are next gone over, but sufficient of the dialogue has been given to afford an idea of the manner in which Trissino conducted this species of writing, which, at the

period in which he lived, was so fashionable in Italy.

The epistle to Margarita Pia Sanseverina, on the life which should be led by a widow, abounds in maxims of plain good sense, and is at the same time written with great eloquence. In speaking of the caution with which the widow ought to conduct her conversation with the world, he thus speaks of her forming intimacies with persons of power and rank: "There are two dominant desires in the minds of most human beings—the one is the desire of greatness, the other of wealth; from which if we could free ourselves and remain content with being as we are without seeking any thing else, we should be free from many fatigues, evils, and anxieties which now distress us. We should also leave many things undone which these impel us to do, and not seek with so much anxiety the friendship of the great to make us great, but should do as Diogenes did, who, being at Athens, received an invitation to visit Alexander the Great in Macedonia, upon which he answered, that it was no farther from Macedonia to Athens than it was from Athens to Macedonia; which magnanimous reply had such weight with that most excellent King that he went to Athens to see him. Oh! if

we could be wise enough to act in the same way, how much quieter and happier our lives would be. But, void of wisdom, weak and miserable mortals, seeing that wealth and power may procure us the means of satisfying our appetites, we are so eager to win them, that to gain these we sacrifice every other good, and not unfrequently destroy both body and soul; never reflecting how unwise it is to seek to possess power over others while we forget how to govern our own appetites. I have made this little digression that you may understand that as I judge it wrong and imprudent in any one to seek the favour of the great to exalt themselves, I consider it in the highest degree improper that a woman should do so; for even if she do it without danger to her honour, she certainly cannot do it without injury to her reputation. And, indeed, it appears to me that every female ought to content herself with the station in which she is placed, and seek no greater good than that of rendering her life perfectly virtuous."*

Among the contemporaries of Trissino, Giovanni Rucellai was one of his most intimate friends and associates, and like him was one of the first reformers, or rather authors, of Italian tragedy. He

* Opere, vol. ii. p. 284.

was the descendant of an ancient and noble Florentine family, and was born in the month of October 1475. It is not known to whom his education was first intrusted, but he studied during his youth under Francesco Gattoni da Diacceto, and acquired an extensive acquaintance with the Latin and Greek classics. Being related on the mother's side to the Medici, his family connexions united with his abilities to introduce him at an early period to public employments, and in 1505 he was sent ambassador to Venice. He is supposed to have taken an active part in the restoration of the Medici to their power in the state, and to have been among the noblemen by whose exertions that event was brought about in the year 1512. As a reward, however, for his attachment, Lorenzo promoted him to several lucrative employments, and, on his being made Captain-General of the Pontifical army, took him to Rome. Leo X. treated him with the greatest favour, and, on his visit to Florence, spent some time with him in his garden, much celebrated for its beauty and extent, to hear him recite his tragedy of "Rosmunda." Nor was the Pontiff's esteem for him evidenced only by such attentions as these; he put him on the list of those whom he intended to promote to the rank of

Cardinal, and would, it is believed, have carried this intention into execution but for the envy of other members of his family. As some compensation for the disappointment which Rucellai felt at finding his hopes of advancement so long deferred, Leo sent him ambassador to France, but died soon after the poet had reached his place of destination. On his way home he heard of the election of Adrian V., and having no reason to expect any favour at his hands, he proceeded to Florence. He was received in his native city with many demonstrations of respect, and in April 1523 was sent to Rome with a congratulatory address to the new Pope. The short Pontificate of Adrian being terminated, Clement VII. ascended the throne, and Rucellai was again flattered with the hopes of advancement to the highest dignities of the Church. Nor would he have been disappointed, had he not allowed himself to consider the rank of Cardinal as alone sufficient to reward his services, or testify the regard in which he expected to be held by his relatives. Having previously received some other valuable appointments, he was made Governor of the castle of St. Angelo, in which situation he died, and shortly before Rome was besieged by the Imperialists; Heaven, it has been observed, thereby

saving him from the misery which he must have suffered from such a spectacle, and from being obliged either to act as gaoler to his revered relative, or to be made a prisoner in the castle himself.*

Among other poets of a secondary class who flourished at or near this period, were Broccardo and Francesco Maria Molza, both of them men of genius, but prevented from producing any thing sufficient to establish their reputation, the one by an early death, the other by the unsettled and lavish manner in which he passed his life. Broccardo was bred to the law, but could never subdue that passion for poetry which seemed to form an element of his nature. The fruits of the hours which he stole from his studies were several miscellaneous pieces, which, on account of their merit, found their way into different publications. But either the praise which attended these first attempts of his muse, or the too high opinion he had formed of his own powers, led him into an error which not only blighted his hopes of literary renown, but caused his death. Trusting to his wit and the flattery he had received as a young man of great ability, he ventured to attack Cardinal Bembo, in his quarrel with whom Bernardo Tasso,

* Giornale de' Letterati.

as we have seen, was on the point of being involved. But the reputation of the Cardinal was too securely established on the prevailing taste of the day to suffer from the attacks of such an opponent, and poor Broccardo not only saw the object of his satire escape without harm, but found himself exposed to the general laugh and scorn of the literary public. The pride and vivacity of youth were sufficient to buoy him up in making the bold attempt on the veteran author, but they entirely forsook him when he saw that he was treated with ridicule; his spirits were speedily broken, and, after a short struggle with his feelings, he was attacked with a disorder, the consequence in a great measure of his melancholy, which proved fatal.

Molza lived longer and wrote more, but fell a victim to his dissipated pleasures. In his youth he equalled the most famous scholars in aptitude for learning, not confining his attention to Latin and Greek, but making himself acquainted with Hebrew while pursuing the ordinary course of study. Having, however, been sent by his father to Rome, he had scarcely reached the age of manhood when he abandoned himself to pleasure, which he continued to pursue without restraint till summoned home by his father, who forthwith

married him to a lady of his native city, Modena. This event took place in 1512, but after remaining about four years with his wife, he returned to Rome, and was quickly involved in the same vortex of dissipation from which his father had so lately rescued him. Ippolito de' Medici and Alessandro Farnese were his successive protectors, and, considering his abilities and connexions, there is little doubt but that he might have advanced himself both in fortune and reputation; but, while his company was universally courted, while he was regarded as the chief ornament of academies, and he could delight the most accomplished men in Rome with his conversation, he was almost reduced to want. He at length returned to Modena, where he died in February 1544. The poems of Molza, which have obtained great praise both for elegance of style and richness of fancy, were printed with those of Broccardo in 1538 at Venice.

The Life of Francesco Berni.

Francesco Berni.

Francesco Berni, from the frequent mention he makes of himself in the "Orlando Innamorato," might almost claim to be placed among the autobiographers; but, notwithstanding the accounts which he has left of himself, it is unknown, except from a comparison of incidents in his subsequent life, in what year he was born. According, however, to a calculation, the correctness of which there is little reason to doubt, his birth took place in one of the last five or seven years of the fifteenth century, his father being of an ancient and noble family, but possessing a fortune far inferior to his ancestral respectability.* He was born

* Mazzuchelli.

in Lamporecchio, in the Vale of Mevole, whence he was sent to Florence, where he remained till he was about nineteen, and then proceeded to Rome. He had, it appears, a relative there, who was a Cardinal, and is supposed to have been the Cardinal di Bibbiena. Berni naturally expected that, possessing considerable ability and an active mind, he should have been greatly aided in his pursuits by the influence of his kinsman; but, though he did him no harm, he was of no service to him, and he transferred himself, on the death of the Cardinal, without any regret, to the Cardinal's nephew. The same fate, however, attended him in his new service, and his patience being worn out with the indifferent treatment he received from his relatives, he attached himself to the Court of the Pope, in the character of Secretary to the Pontifical Datary.

Though the new situation in which Berni had thus placed himself was neither more advantageous, nor the employment less irksome, than that of attending to the caprices of his powerful relative, he remained Secretary to the Datary seven years, spending part of his time at Rome, and part at Verona, of which see his master, Giammatteo Giberti, was Bishop. He had already entered, it appears, the ecclesiastical profession, but had made

little advance towards acquiring the wealth or dignities which had been enjoyed by his kinsmen. There were, however, two great hindrances to his success besides the indifference or neglect of his patrons; he was unconquerably indolent, and he was a versifier. But, unsuccessful as he was as a candidate for profitable employments, he was greatly admired for the liveliness of his disposition, the elegance of his poems, which he was accustomed to recite before his friends, and the brilliancy and variety of his conversation. He thus acquired considerable popularity as a literary man, and was regarded as one of the chief personages in the Academy de' Vignaiuoli, composed of the most respectable and distinguished men of Rome. This learned association was founded by a gentleman named Oberto Strozzi, originally of Mantua, but who had latterly resided at Naples, on leaving which city he removed to Rome. The members of the Academy took poetical names, and one was known as Il Mosto, another as L'Agresto, and a third as Il Corogno, and so on. This was a fancy which, according to M. Ginguené, was hardly becoming a grave assembly of learned men: but the Accademia de' Vignaiuoli was as famed for its convivial festivals as for the erudition of its members;

and Berni, in his facetious epistles, alludes more than once to the rich banquets he enjoyed with his brother academicians. A letter is quoted by Tiraboschi,* in which Mauro describes a meeting of this kind, and which he designates as a supper made for the poets, and given by Signor Mussetola, on the eve of St. Lucia. "I, as a poet," says the writer, "was present, and no other wine was drunk but that of the vineyards of Pontano, which was brought by post from Naples. So much poetic virtue had it in itself, that we all grew warm, not by looking at it, but by tasting and drinking it, and that seven or eight times and more for once, and such was the effect of it that it made me one of the Muses. . . . . One M. Marco da Lodi, at the conclusion of the supper, sang to his lyre, as did also M. Pietro Polo. . . . ." But in the dedication of a work to Strozzi, the Academy is represented under a graver aspect: "You were no sooner arrived at Rome," says the writer, Marco Sabino, "than your house was consecrated to the Muses, and became the rendezvous of all the most famous academicians at the Court, who almost every day assembling there, as it were in consistory, Berni brought his excellent bon-mots,

* Storia, vol. vii.

Mauro his abstract pleasantries, Monsignor della Casa his ever ready and ingenious conceits, Lelio Capilupo, the Abate Firenzuolo, Francesco Bini, and the amiable Giovo da Lucca, with many others, their delightful fancies, and sweetly conversed in your company, and in your musical banquets, referring all things to the judgment of two censors. Thither also came the wonderful improvisatori G. B. Strozzi, Pero, Niccolò Franciotti, and Cæsare da Fano, who sang at the instant on any subject proposed to them, and did not more astonish than delight us!"

Berni was a spectator in the month of September 1526, of the furious attack made on Rome by the Colonni. In a letter written soon after the event by Girolamo Negro, the circumstances of the assault are described with great particularity and vigour; and, after relating the destruction of the most splendid apartments in the Papal palace, with all their valuable furniture, the writer mentions that Berni was a sufferer among the rest. "All the apartments of the corridor were broken open and destroyed, except that of Campeggio, which was defended by some Spaniards, who pretended they had taken possession of it. Ridolfi's was wholly ruined. The Datary saved a good part

of his property in the castle, but has notwithstanding suffered great loss; among other things, porcelain of the most beautiful kind was broken, to the value of six hundred ducats. The apartments del Paradiso were all destroyed. . . . . The apartments of the Vicar of our Lord up to the very chamber of Alcionio. Berni, whose lodging adjoins it, was wholly stripped, and besides carrying away his clothes and furniture, they seized a large pile of letters directed to the Datary, to whom Berni is secretary; but hearing some one, I do not know who, cry *chiesa! chiesa!* they left them behind."*

During his long attendance on the Roman Court, the only close intimacy he formed with men of power was that with the Cardinals Niccolò and Ridolfi, and with his master Giberti, whom he appears to have regarded with undeviating esteem and regard. He was sent by that prelate into Abruzzo, to superintend the concerns of one of his abbeys there, to which circumstance he alludes in a letter to Francesco Bini,† in which he laughingly assures his friend that he knows what it is to govern, and in a madrigal, in which he complains that he was placed by his office in the midst of a

* Lettere di Principi. Ven. 1581.

† Lett. Facete, Raccolte per Atanagi.

certain set who were enemies to good manners. In company with Giberti he also made several journeys, and spent a considerable time at Verona, of which city he makes frequent mention in his works, at one time lavishing upon it the most glowing praise, and at another making it the object of his ridicule. It was there, however, that he composed, it is said, the chief part of his "Rifacimento," and the lines in which he alludes to this circumstance, are among the most elevated that his pen produced:—

Tu che per l'alto, largo e chiaro letto
Ratto correndo fai grato romore,
Raffrena il corso tuo veloce alquanto
Mentre alle ripe tue scrivendo io canto.
Rapido Fiume che d' alpestre vena
Impetuosamente a noi discendi,
E quella Terra sopr' ogn' altra amena
Per mezzo, a guisa di meandro, fendi:
Quella che di valor, d' ingegno è piena
Per cui tu con più lume, Italia, splendi,
Di cui la fama in te chiara risuona
Eccelsa, graziosa, alma Verona.

. . . . . .

Quella, nel cui leggiadro amato seno
Mentre io sto questi versi miei cantando
Dal ciel benigno a lei sempre e sereno
Tanto piglio di buon quanto fuor mando:

E nel fecondo suo lieto terreno
Allargo le radici, e' rami spando,
Qual stelle arbuscel frutto produce
Se in meglior terra, e cielo altri il conduce.
Lib. ii. Can. i. St. 5, &c.

Thou, who thy channell'd bed, broad, clear, and deep,
With grateful murmur rapid pour'st along,
Not thus upon thy course so swiftly sweep,
While to thy shores I frame and pen my song!
Thou rapid stream, whose fount impetuous swells
From the cleft Alps, how beauteous is the land
Through which, meander-like, thou wind'st—there dwells
Of virtue and the Muse the sacred band
That wreathes with light, proud Italy, thy name,
And thee, bright, loved Verona! consecrates to fame.
. . . . . .
That beauteous land, upon whose fragrant breast
While thus I weave at ease my wandering strain,
From her blue skies, with calm for ever blest,
My heart more good than what it gives may gain;
And on her plains, with fertile beauty drest,
My roots increase, my branches spread again,
Even as transplanted to more genial lands
The sterile tree revives, and with new bloom expands.

In a letter written during his residence at Verona, we find him alluding to the constant occupation afforded him by his situation, which was not a little augmented by his fondness for corre-

sponding with his friends, and by the composition of his poetry. "My Signor Bini," says he, "you must be content to give me licence to write no more, as I have been writing all the morning;"* and in one of the stanzas of the Innamorato, he describes himself as constantly surrounded with letters, some crowded into his bosom, and others under his arms, while his brains were almost spent with unceasing writing. Venice, Padua, and the south of France, were also visited in obedience to the directions of his master, and considering that a hatred of all fatigue formed the prominent feature of his character, it is not surprising that he at length grew weary of so much travelling and writing, and sought his dismissal from the post of Secretary to the Datary.

The only reward he had received for his long and patient self-denial in the service of Giberti, was a canonship at Florence, and notwithstanding his attachment to the Bishop, he was not backward in expressing his discontent at such a poor return for his fidelity. A man, however, whose chief good is the possession of rest, and freedom to enjoy either his books or his dinner, is far better prepared to meet the disappointments of a courtier,

* Lettere, Raccolte dall' Atanagi.

than one whose ambition is greater than his hopes. Berni, therefore, quietly resigning himself to his lot, bade his master adieu, and repaired to Florence, where his main object was to enjoy himself in the best manner his income would allow. But his reputation as a poet, and his late connexion with the Pontifical Court, recommended him to the notice of the Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici, and his cousin the Duke Alexander. Zillioli, as cited by Mazzuchelli, says that Berni passed his time very pleasantly, conversing with the numerous literary men who were ambitious of his acquaintance, and contenting himself with the faithful and sedulous attention of his favourite *Fantesca*, and one footman.

The account he has given of his manner of spending his life is an admirable specimen of his humour, and has been some time before the English reader in the excellent version which Mr. Rose has inserted in his useful and elegant analysis of the Orlando Innamorato. In a similar style he describes his own character, and allows that he was passionate, and not always nice in his conversation, but contends that he was neither ambitious nor avaricious, and that, though he hated his enemies, he was a warm and steady friend, and

more inclined to love than hate. Of his person he thus speaks:

Di persona era grande, magro e schietto;
Lunghe e sotil le gambe forte aveva,
E 'l naso grande, e 'l viso largo e stretto
Lo spazio, che le ciglia didiveva:
Concavo l' occhio aveva, azzurro e netto.
La barba folta quasi il nascondeva,
Se l' avesse portata, ma il padrone
Aveva con le barbe aspra quistione.

His frame was large but spare, nor void of grace,
And his long supple limbs were strong though thin,
Large was his nose, meagre and straight his face,
And small the line his arching brows between,
He had a clear blue eye, but in its place
So deeply set, that it had hidden been
By the thick folded beard's undue dimension,
But with the beard its lord had often fierce contention.

His manner of living, however, gave rise to many and very serious accusations, and there are few vices of the worst kind of which Berni was not accused. Except the caution with which all such general accusations should be received, especially when preferred against a man whose careless disposition and indolence would expose him at least as much to slander as to vice, there is little, it

appears, to be said in contradiction of Berni's censurers.

There is reason to believe that it was owing to the indifferent character of our poet, that the story respecting his death obtained such general credit. According to several authors, the intimacy which existed between him and the Cardinal Ippolito, led to a violent dispute between the poet and Duke Alexander, which rose to such a height, that the Cardinal, whose hatred to his cousin was well known, ventured to ask his assistance in putting Alexander to death by poison. Berni, however, it is farther said, was horror-struck at the proposal, and refusing to have any share in such an iniquitous design, was himself poisoned by the Cardinal, and died on the 26th of July, 1536. Another account states, that it was the Duke who wished to poison the Cardinal, and invited Berni to assist him, and that the latter did not die till 1543, when he was poisoned by Alexander. But with respect to the former of these relations, it is observed that Berni was certainly not poisoned by the Cardinal, who died in 1535, and fell, as is supposed, a victim to his cousin's machinations; and in respect to the latter account, that it is very improbable that the

Duke should have destroyed him for not poisoning a person who had already been dead a year.,

Berni enjoys as high a degree of reputation as can possibly be gained, perhaps, by the class of writing in which his genius enabled him to excel. He occupies, without dispute, the highest place among the comic poets of his country, and some of his admirers have gone so far as to contend that he was the first Italian who wrote in this style, an assertion which, without a very useless refinement upon words, can hardly be supported, when even the Beoni of Lorenzo de' Medici is remembered, the strange productions of Burchiello, or many of the passages in the Morgante Maggiore of Pulci. If, however, a refinement of language and delicacy of humour unknown to previous writers, can give this author a claim to originality, he richly deserves the praise of having founded a new school of poetry; but for the honour not only of poetry but of genius itself, it should never be forgotten that there is a great and essential difference between the sparkling wit of a writer like Berni, and the rich humour which is so often the accompaniment of the highest powers of mind. Berni was a scholar, had a good ear, was well skilled in

the Lingua Cortigiana, could rhyme with facility, and loved at his heart both mirth and satire; his verses derive their superiority from this union of excellent qualities for a burlesque poet, but they have little in them to give relief to the glare of wit with which they are suffused, except some learned or satirical allusion, which may occasionally succeed in diverting the reader, but can rarely afford us the same pleasure as humour of a higher class. Berni possessed no great or lofty powers of mind; little or no imagination, and as little feeling; he had consequently only his wit and command of language to trust to for all he wished to effect. That he succeeded in reaching the object he had in view, is allowed on all sides; but he has been placed in a more conspicuous light than any mere humourist deserves, and smile as we must at the ludicrous picture he has left of himself, swimming in his bed six yards wide, sucking soups and jellies through a pipe because to use his teeth was too great a labour, and counting the beams in the ceiling of his room in all possible ways for amusement; however we may smile at this at the first reading, we find nothing but the picture of a lazy fellow, more lazy than ordinary, at the second. What is worse, the same picture is again and again presented us in

other poems of the author, and we must have a great appetite for such humour, if we are not soon weary of his intolerable repetitions on the subject of his indolence, his hatred of disturbance, and his love of good cheer. Even in his letters, his facetiousness is continually resolving itself into this topic; and with all his ingenuity and good taste, Berni seems to have clung to his own picture as his best study on all occasions, and never to have suspected that a wit who is constantly talking of himself, is not less tiresome after a little time than any other egotist. When we add to this, that several of his minor productions are most grossly obscene, and that he owed, it is probable, much of the reputation he enjoyed among his contemporaries to wit employed in this base manner, we must place him still lower in the ranks of his distinguished countrymen; and shall not perhaps be guilty of much injustice, if we regard him as one of those ecclesiastical epicureans of the sixteenth century, whose infidelity and licentiousness would have branded them with immediate infamy, but that the wit of some, the profound politics of others, and the hypocrisy of the rest, screened them from observation.

The work, on which the extensive reputation of Berni chiefly rests, is his Rifacimento of Boiardo's

Orlando Innamorato, a production which has had the singular success of rendering the original poem, of which it is a revision, almost obsolete, though for near two centuries after its publication it was itself unread and almost unknown. The object which Berni proposed to himself in revising the Orlando, has been differently stated by different authors; by some, he is supposed to have formed the idea of rivalling Ariosto, while others, and with more probability, assert that he only intended to improve the antiquated and unclassical language of Boiardo, and by interspersing it with strokes of humour, give it a degree of life and animation which it wanted in its original form. Varchi observes, that if he ever conceived the idea of rivalling Ariosto, he showed himself to be utterly void of that taste, judgment, and prudence, which he was reputed to possess. But supposing that he only aimed at improving the poem in the manner stated above, the opinions of most of the critics are in his favour, and Mazzuchelli observes, that he may easily be cleared from the accusations of those who pretend that he was guilty of presumption in attempting to improve the Orlando, since "he has by no means injured the poem, but on the contrary has augmented its celebrity." He also observes, that

though Teofilo Folengo, Lodovico Dolce, and Aretino tried the experiment of re-making the work of Berni himself, not one of them completed the undertaking. "Boiardo was much read," says M. Ginguené, "before Ariosto published his poem, but the Orlando Furioso threw it into oblivion. An attempt was made to continue it by Agostini, to reform it by Domenichini; but the only way of reforming it was wholly to re-model it, to disengage it from the too serious form which Boiardo had given it, and to borrow, in order to revive it, some colours from the pallet of Ariosto. Berni ventured to undertake this task, and he succeeded; but it is much less surprising that he was successful, than that, with a genius so free and independent, he could so closely follow the original, canto after canto, and even stanza after stanza. It is, in fact, principally the style which he has re-made; but it is style, above all, which makes a poem live; and as the Orlando Innamorato re-made by Berni is that of all Italian romantic epics which approaches nearest to the Orlando Furioso, so is it that which, next to the Orlando Furioso, is most read." Like Mazzuchelli, M. Ginguené contends that Boiardo is much indebted to Berni. "In effacing the poem as he did, he in fact preserved Boiardo's renown, which

must have perished had he only been the author of a poem which nobody read; but while the work is read in its new form, the public is continually reminded, seeing it even on the title of the book, that it was first composed by Boiardo, and that it is only owing to the style of the second of these poets that they enjoy the inventions of the first." *

M. Panizzi, however, allows much less merit to Berni, and while he bestows upon him considerable praise for his humour, and for the elegance of his language, very justly finds fault with the taste and indiscretion of those who have contributed to the substitution of the Rifacimento for the original work. He has also adduced more than one instance in which the alteration made in the stanzas of Boiardo is an injury rather than improvement to the poem, and at the same time suggests that there are reasons for doubting whether the Rifacimento be, in fact, the entire work of our author.

Before concluding this memoir, it may be as well to mention that Berni's undertaking, able and accomplished as he was, was far less venturous than that of another poet, Niccolò degli Agostini. Not thinking of confining himself to the improvement of Boiardo's versification or language, he at once

* Hist. Lit. vol. iv. c. x.

determined to rival him in invention, from which the lively Berni modestly shrank, and which he never attempted. Thirty-three new cantos, however, were produced, and published with the original Orlando Innamorato, but they were speedily consigned to oblivion. It may perhaps be regarded as some excuse for this continuator of Boiardo, who is allowed to have possessed neither taste nor fancy, that he was urged to the attempt by Francis II. Sforza, Duke of Milan, in whose employ he appears to have been at the time he commenced the work. His labour, however, was interrupted for as long a period as ten years, during which time, it is supposed, he was in disgrace with his patron; but little is known of the particulars of his life, and his productions are more an object of curiosity to the historian than the biographer.

Berni has been followed by a host of imitators, whose style has received, from the name of the founder of the school, the appellation of Bernesche. Lord Byron, who seems to have been a careful reader of the Italian comic poets, and translated part of Pulci's "Morgante Maggiore," may be termed one of Berni's imitators.

The Life of Alamanni.

Alamanni.

Luigi Alamanni was born at Florence on the 28th of October 1495, and was the son of Pietro di Francesco Alamanni by his fourth wife, Ginevra di Niccolò Paganelli. His early years were spent in the university of his native city, and his love for literature bringing him acquainted with the most distinguished men of the day, he shortly made himself conspicuous for ability in the composition of light poetry. In the garden of Bernardo Rucellai, forming, it is said, one of the most delicious retreats that philosophers ever enjoyed, he was accustomed to join a party of friends in discussing subjects of interest in philosophy and literature.

While he was still a youth, he thus enjoyed the advantages of hearing such men as the celebrated Macchiavelli, Buondelmonti, Francesco Vettria and others, develope their favourite opinions; while the presence and conversation of Giovan-giorgio Trissino, whom he regarded as a master as well as a companion, inspired him with the desire of acquiring excellence in the art to which his genius led him.

About the year 1516, he married Alessandra Serristori, and by the interest which his father possessed with the Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, was received at Court with the most flattering attention. The patronage which the Cardinal extended to him, gave his friends reason to hope that he would speedily rise to the most lucrative posts in the government; but whether the capriciousness of the Prince, or the irritability of his own temper was the cause, he offended his patron, and so greatly that all favour was withdrawn from him. The disgust he felt at what he considered an unjust neglect, led him into committing other offences. It had been ordered by the Cardinal, that whoever was found with arms on his person should be fined; Luigi, either neglecting this command in order to insult the Prince, or from an idea that his quality as a courtier exempted him from the decree, was taken

late one evening wearing his arms, and was accordingly condemned to pay the penalty. His anger at this circumstance is said to have known no bounds, and he was thenceforth wholly employed in seeking the means of satisfying his resentment.

The death of Leo X., which occurred in December 1521, afforded him an opportunity for putting his designs into execution. As he was not the only Florentine of rank who had reason to be discontented with the Cardinal, he found little difficulty in forming a party to aid him in his views. Among the foremost were his literary friends Zanobi Buondelmonti, Jacopo da Diacceto and others, and the plot having been fully arranged, they resolved, by putting the Cardinal to death, to free their country from what they considered a state of disgraceful servitude. The conspirators, however, did not depend on their own exertions solely for the success of the enterprise, and a messenger from one of their principal confederates being intercepted, the plot was made known to the Cardinal. Jacopo da Diacceto was soon after taken, and being put to a public examination, no doubt remained as to the chief movers of the insurrection. Fortunately for them, intelligence arrived at Buondelmonti's, in whose grounds they were met for

consultation, sufficiently early to allow of their escape. Alamanni happened at the time to be a short distance out of town, but receiving the tidings by one of his friends, he fled without loss of time into the territory of the Duke of Urbino, and from thence to Venice, where he met many of his associates, and was hospitably entertained with them in the house of the senator Carlo Capello. But they had not been long settled in Venice when the Cardinal de' Medici was advanced to the pontifical dignity, and it quickly became evident they could not with safety remain there any longer. Alamanni and some of his companions, therefore, immediately took their departure, but in passing by Brescia, they were seized and thrown into confinement. Happily, their persons were unknown, or were pretended to be so by those who captured them, and after suffering a brief interruption to their journey, they were suffered to proceed. Our author now visited many parts of Italy and France, and was received in the latter country with great attention by Francis I., to whom he owed so much kindness in the concluding years of his life. In the October of 1525, as he was passing the sea between the Isle of Elba and that

of Giglio, he was taken suddenly ill and narrowly escaped with his life.

The events which occurred during the two following years, restored Alamanni to his native city. Clement VII., having fallen a prisoner into the hands of the Emperor, saw himself on all sides stripped of his possessions; while the Florentines, rejoicing at the opportunity offered them for recovering their liberty, instantly expelled his partisans and established a popular government. It was now, however, strongly debated whether they should seek to pacify the Pope, or seek the alliance of his enemy. A general assembly was convened to discuss this question with proper formality. Alamanni was present with the rest of the citizens, but, holding no office, did not take part in the debate, till expressly called upon for his opinions, which he expressed, after some modest hesitation, with admirable eloquence. To the surprise of all present, he spoke in contradiction to the ruling party, which gave birth to so many suspicions against him that he was obliged to retire to Genoa.

But if men of eminent talents are exposed in turbulent times to the jealousy or opposition of the multitude, they are generally recompensed for any

temporary trouble by the honour shown them the moment the populace begins to lose the confidence they had placed in their own councils. Alamanni while at Genoa, in October 1527, was elected Commissary-General by the Florentines, who could think of no man equally fitted to aid them in their approaching contest with the allied forces of France and Venice. Forgetting the injurious treatment he had received at the hands of his fellow-citizens, he accepted the office, and by his zeal and ability performed the functions of his situation to the general satisfaction of the Republic. In the year following his election to the Commissariat, he was inscribed in the Florentine militia formed at that period; and in 1529, pronounced an oration in the church of Santa Croce, in the presence of the soldiery and the magistrates.

Shortly after this, circumstances occurred which again called forth his political sentiments on the subject of the connection between Florence and the great powers of Europe. The late campaign having terminated in the discomfiture of the French and their Italian allies, the former had entered into a secret negotiation with the Emperor, and the Pope only stipulated for the restoration of the Medici to Florence, as the condition of his joining in the

treaty. Alamanni, finding affairs in this situation, counselled the Republic in the strongest terms to send an ambassador to the Emperor, and if possible obtain an accommodation. In this measure he was supported by the famous Admiral Andrea Doria, who secretly encouraged him to proceed in the design; but all his efforts proved vain, and finding himself again treated with unmerited suspicion, he once more returned to Genoa. He, however, continued to exert himself with his friends and partisans to effect the objects he thought so essential to the benefit and safety of his country. To this end, he went with his friend Doria into Spain; during his stay in which country, he discovered that a treaty was entered into by the Pope and the Emperor, of which the principal article respected the restoration of the Medici to Florence, which was to be accomplished under the protection of an Imperial army about to march into Italy. Immediately on making this important discovery he hastened back to Florence, and had scarcely arrived there when the Emperor was on his way to Genoa. The Republic, on finding the perilous situation in which it stood, sent four ambassadors, with Alamanni at the head of the mission, to meet the monarch and propose terms. The embassy reached Savona, where

Charles was detained in his passage by contrary winds, and our poet was received with the most courteous attention; but after two days of fruitless negotiation and discussions, which were continued till both parties entered Genoa, the Emperor declared his resolution to reinstate the Medici in their former authority, and at last signified that as he could not do it by persuasion, he should employ force. Florence was accordingly soon after besieged by the united forces of the Pope and the Emperor, and Alamanni, after remaining some months at Genoa, proceeded to Lyons in 1530, where he applied to the Florentine merchants settled there for a loan of money to assist the Republic in its defence. They, in their turn, applied to the King of France, who was greatly their debtor, and having collected a considerable sum they sent part of it to Pisa, while Alamanni carried the remainder to Genoa, where it is feared, by indulging in his ruling vice, the love of play, he lost some of the money committed to his trust.

Florence soon after this, that is in the August of 1530, was obliged to open its gates to the Imperial forces, and Alessandro de' Medici being reinstated in his authority, the principal persons of the conquered party were condemned either to banishment

or imprisonment. Among the rest, Alamanni was confined three years in Provence, where he became acquainted with the lady whom he commemorates in his verses under the name of "Ligura Piantra." Finding at length that there was no chance of a change in the affairs of his country, he resolved upon seeking the favour of Francis I., who was known to be passionately fond of Italian poetry, and a general favourer of learned men. On arriving at the Court of this monarch, Alamanni was received with the greatest respect, and was subsequently placed in many lucrative offices. He was also honoured with the collar of the Order of St. Michael, and by the munificent patronage of the King was enabled to cultivate his genius without interruption. The fruits of the leisure he thus enjoyed appeared in 1532, under the title of "Opere Toscane," and with a dedication to Francis.

In the following year, on the marriage taking place between the Duke of Orleans and Catherine de' Medici, he was appointed by the latter Master of the Household, and not long after manifested his gratitude for this promotion by presenting his royal mistress with his poem entitled "Coltivazione," which he dedicated to the King, to whom he begged her to send it. For six years he remained in

France, without revisiting any part of Italy; but from some lines in one of his sonnets, it appears that he had then the gratification of repassing the Alps, and beholding the scenes which had been rendered still dearer by his exile. "I thank God," says he, "that I turn my steps to see thee at least once more, after six years' absence, superb Italia!"

It was in the same year that Alamanni paid this visit to his native country that Duke Alessandro was killed, and it is not impossible that his journey was in some manner connected with the various plots which had been long in agitation by the exiled party. On the death of Clement VII. in 1534, six procurators were chosen by the fugitives to intercede with the Emperor, and of these our poet was one; but his absence not allowing him to act, his place, it is worthy of mention, was supplied by a namesake of the great Dante. The efforts made on this occasion proved unavailing, and no better result attended the application which on the death of the Duke was made with stronger hopes of success.

The years 1538 and 1539 were passed in Rome, as also the former part of 1540. It is supposed that at this period he was under the protection of the Cardinal Ippolito d' Este, but, however this may be, he shortly after proceeded to Naples, and from

thence passed the confines of Florence to Ferrara, Padua, and Mantua, where he was in the April of 1540, before the end of which he returned to France. The following year he made another journey into Italy, and is said to have been present at the Carnival of Ferrara, and heard Giraldi Cintio recite for the first time his celebrated tragedy of "Orbecche." In 1543 he was about to set out as ambassador from Francis to Genoa, but was prevented by the political situation of that State.

The year 1544 is an era in his life worthy of notice, as he was then sent ambassador to the Emperor Charles V. in Spain. This mission was the more formidable, as he had written, during the war between the two monarchs, some verses which expressed the bitterest dislike of the Emperor, and were well known to have reached his ears. Among the rest were these lines—

——— L'Aquila grifagna
Che per più divorar due becchi porta.

On arriving at the Court, he was admitted to a morning's audience, and in the presence of a large number of the greatest personages of the empire, delivered an oration in praise of the Sovereign. Unfortunately, however, several of the verses began consecutively with the word "aquila," and when he

finished his speech, which Charles had listened to with the greatest attention, the latter quietly added

——— L' aquila grifagna
Che per più divorar due becchi porta.

Alamanni never gave a better proof of his wit as a courtier, or of his confidence as a republican, than now. Instead of being struck dumb with confusion, he replied with a grave countenance, "In those lines, most magnanimous Prince, I spoke as a poet, whose privilege it is to fable and invent; now I reason as an ambassador, in whom it would be disgraceful to utter any thing false, and especially when I am sent from so sincere and holy a Prince as mine, to a Prince so sincere and holy as your Majesty. Formerly I wrote as a youth, now I speak as an old man: then full of disdain and anger at finding myself expelled from my country by the Duke; now free from every passion, and assured that your Majesty intended no injustice: then filled with false information, now informed by the infinite experience of what I have seen and heard in my commerce with the world." Charles had the good sense to be perfectly satisfied with this apology, and laying his hand on the orator's shoulder, said, "that he greatly regretted that

the event at Florence had occasioned the exile of so excellent a person, but that there was the less to regret, as he had by that means obtained the patronage of the great and generous Francis, and that every nation was the country of a virtuous man." To these gracious words the Emperor added some rich presents, and dismissed the ambassador delighted with his reception, and the courtesy with which he had been treated not only by the sovereign but by all his nobles. On his return to France, he was rewarded by Francis with new grants, bestowed on him and his son; and on the accession of Henry II. to the throne, he was treated by that monarch with the same regard as he had enjoyed under the heroic Francis. The young king, after presenting him with a large gold ornament, desired him to complete the poem of "Girone il Cortese," begun some time before, and which he finished and published with a dedication to Henry in 1548. He appears also to have been equally esteemed by the new monarch for his political experience, as some of his letters allude to the journeys he made on public business, and he is known to have visited Genoa in 1551, to obtain its assistance in the war which Henry undertook against the Emperor to defend his ally the Duke of Parma.

He was not successful in this mission, and on his return to France, he resumed his poetical labours by continuing the "Avarchide," which, however, he did not live to complete. His death was occasioned by a dysentery, which attacked him while residing with the Court at Amboise, and terminated his existence on the 18th of April 1556. His remains were deposited, according to Ghilini, in the church of the Cordeliers in Paris.

Alamanni had by his first wife Alessandra Serristori two sons, Batista and Niccolò, who severally enjoyed the highest offices in the church and state. He had also another son and daughter who died young. The following is a list of the works of this author, now little remembered, but one of the most distinguished men of the sixteenth century.

"Opere Toscane," consisting of Elegies, divided into four books, of which the first three are amorous, and the fourth devotional. Eclogues, written in imitation of Theocritus, and in blank verse, which he is said to have been among the first to bring into use, Trissino being allowed to have the better claim to originality. Sonetti, Ballate, and Canzone; Favole, Satire, and the Salmi Penitenziali, form the remainder of the first volume of the "Opere Toscane." The second consists of "Selve," divided

into three books, and written in blank verse; of the Favola di Fetonte; and the Tragedia di Antigone, merely a translation from that of Socrates of the same name, but done in so admirable a style, that it acquired the praises of the most excellent Italian critics; of Hymns, composed in imitation of Pindar, and which have obtained him the reputation of being the first to introduce that species of poem among his countrymen, and to employ the classical divisions of strophe, anti-strophe, and epode, named by him ballata, contra-ballata, and stanza; and of Stanze, in ottava rima; and Sonnets, intermixed with ballate.

The other works of Alamanni are, 1. La Coltivazione, considered as one of the most excellent poems that Italy has produced in the secondary class of composition. It is in blank verse, and is an express imitation of Virgil's Georgics, which it is considered as sometimes to equal, and in one or two passages to surpass. 2. Girone il Cortese, which is supposed to be little more than a poetical version of the old French romance of the same name, which the author mentions as the foundation of the work in his dedication to Henry; it was, however, never much esteemed. 3. L'Avarchide, which derived its name from Avariam, the ancient appellation of the city of Bourges, the capital of Berri

and the siege of which forms the subject of the poem. Like the Girone il Cortese, it met with no success, owing perhaps not so much to the author's want of poetical fervour, as to his absurd pretensions of imitating Homer. 4. Flora, a comedy, equally unesteemed. 5. Epigrammi, consisting of one hundred and twenty-two Italian decasyllabics. 6. Orazione. 7. Rime, or miscellaneous pieces, which are to be found in several collections of Italian poetry, edited at various times by different Italian scholars. 8. Lettere, of which a very few only remain. 9. Some remarks on Homer, which were sufficiently esteemed to be published in the Cambridge edition of 1689.

It has been supposed that he wrote other works which were left unpublished. The principal of these are, La Libertà, a tragedy; but Mazzuchelli says that he made every effort to discover any remains of this poem without effect, and therefore considers it probable that it was erroneously attributed to his pen; besides which, many other miscellaneous pieces are ascribed to him, and several romances, which Il Doni and others assert he wrote, but their testimony is rejected by Mazzuchelli, who supposes the mistake to have arisen from an equivocal use of the word Romanza, applied to fictions whether in prose or verse.

The Life of Battista Guarini.

Battista Guarini.

THE name of Battista Guarini holds a conspicuous place among those of the celebrated men whose genius shed so great a splendour over the Court of Ferrara. He was born in the year 1537, and was the son of Francesco Guarini and the Countess Orsolo Baldassare Macchiavelli. His ancestor Guarino Guarini removed from Verona to Ferrara in the middle of the fourteenth century, and was appointed to the professorship of the Greek language and literature by Niccolò III. Marquis of Este.* He performed the duties of this office with great reputation, and was regarded by

* Barotti, Scrit. Fer.

his contemporaries as one of the most accomplished scholars of the time. Of the early life of Battista little or nothing is known for certain. By some authors he is said to have passed 1556 and the two following years at the University of Padua, but the first circumstance in his history which can be depended upon, is his appointment in 1557 to a professorship in the same school in which his distinguished ancestor had taught, and which was left vacant by the death of his master Alessandro, a scholar of great learning and eminence.

Ferrara at this period was as famous for the learned men of its university as for the numerous nobility and lustre of its court. The wars of Alfonso I. had compelled that prince to contract his domestic expenses in every way that was practicable; and amongst the other methods he employed for that purpose, was the dismissal of many of the professors of the university. In the time, however, of Hercules II. it was restored to its former flourishing condition, and philosophers and learned men from all parts of Europe, from England among the rest, frequented and lectured in its schools. While war raged in other quarters of Italy, and several of its universities were thereby exposed to attack, that of Ferrara formed the asylum of the exiled

professors, and reaped the advantage of their united abilities. Bartolommeo Ricci, in a letter written to a friend in 1556, the year before Guarini was made professor, says, that owing to the pestilence that raged in one part of Italy, and the war that disturbed another, Ferrara enjoyed an unusual concourse both of teachers and scholars. The Duke, however, took a share in the war the following year, and the schools were for a short time closed, but to the gratification of our poet and the other learned men engaged in promoting the glory of the university, it was soon after put in a condition for again asserting its right to rank among the most famous academies in Europe.

The learning and eloquence of Guarini obtained him considerable reputation; he was regarded as the most accomplished orator of the age, and his lectures on poetry and rhetoric were universally admired. He had, it appears, more ambition to be looked up to for his erudition and oratorical abilities than to obtain fame as a poet, considering the latter title, it is remarked, either as of little value, or as pertaining only to a set of idlers.* It must not, however, be forgotten, that the author who puts this sentiment into the mouth of Guarini, resigned

* Apostolo Zeno, Galleria di Minerva.

his own chance of a long-enduring and noble reputation to become a courtier, and that he sacrificed the fruits of extensive learning, and a life spent in the exercise of great talents, to be the servant of a German Emperor. The fate of both Guarini and himself was such as they merited: the one suffered the constant uneasiness of discontent and a disappointed ambition; the other enjoys only a small fragment of the fame he might have won had he been content to exercise his eminent talents with freedom, and as they were most likely to aid the cause of learning and philosophy.

Guarini, however, was not unsuccessful in his pursuit of distinction at Court. Alfonso received him into his service in the year 1567, and trusting to his known abilities as an orator, sent him on a mission to Venice, to congratulate the new Doge, Loredano, having previously raised him to the rank of a Cavalier. Considerable doubt exists as to the chronological order in which his various journeys ought to be arranged; but there is good reason to believe, that after his return from Venice, his first journey in a public capacity, and having published the oration which he addressed to Loredano, he was sent as ambassador to Savoy, where he resided several years; and that on being recalled from that station, he proceeded to Rome; his

journey to which city occurred in the year 1571, and when such was the speed with which he travelled, and the shortness of the notice he had received to prepare for the business of the mission, that he was obliged to compose the address he was to deliver before the new Pope and the conclave of Cardinals during the night on which he arrived. He, however, preserved his reputation as a consummate rhetorician, and it has been asserted, though it appears on insufficient grounds, that Gregory employed his talents in some important affairs of his own. As another proof of the esteem in which he was held as an orator, it is also mentioned that at the funerals of the Emperor Maximilian and the Cardinal Luigi d'Este, which were solemnized at Ferrara, Guarini had the honour of pronouncing the orations customary on such occasions.*

In the year 1563, he was sent into Poland to congratulate Henry of Valois on his election to the throne of that kingdom; and on his way thither visited the Emperor of Germany. On his return from the North, Alfonso saw so much reason to be satisfied with his conduct, that he made him Secretary of State and Counsellor; but events occurred shortly after, which again called for the exercise of his ability as an ambassador. Henry of Valois,

* Niceron, Mem. des Hommes Illus.

after having for a brief period occupied the throne of Poland, was recalled to France by the death of Charles IX., which left him heir to the crown. The kingdom of Poland was thus again become an object of contention to the princes of Europe, and Alfonso being desirous of gaining the prize, but anxious to avoid any disgrace if he should be defeated, entrusted the management of this delicate and important affair to Guarini and another of his courtiers, Gualengui. A curious account of this journey is given by Guarini himself in a letter to his wife, which I extract:—

"This, which you read, is my letter and yet is not my letter; it is mine by dictation, but still is not mine; for I did not write it. You have not, however, so much cause to grieve that it was not written by my hand, as you have reason to rejoice that I had a tongue to say that which otherwise either a vain compassion or little charity would have perhaps concealed. I know well you have complained at not having received letters from me, but I have no need to make an apology, the cause of the omission being much more lamentable than the effect. Do not complain that my silence has been long; thank God that it was not eternal. I set off, as you know, more like a courier than an orator;

I should, however, have been content to fatigue my body could I have rested my mind; but the hand that during the day urged on the horses, was employed through the night in turning over papers, in the same way that Rome saw me arrive in the evening by post, and the next morning beheld me in the consistory to offer homage to Gregory XIII. Nature could not sustain this twofold fatigue of body and mind, especially as I travelled by Saravalle and Ampez, the worst and most disagreeable road, not only on account of its own roughness but of the people, the badness of the horses, and the wretchedness of the inns. The consequence of all was, that on entering Hala I was attacked with a sharp fever. Notwithstanding this I set out immediately for Vienna. What I suffered I leave you to imagine; constant fever, thirst, and scarcely a physician to be met with; wretched lodgings, and poisoned with stench; food that would turn the stomach of even a healthy person; beds which choke one in the feathers; in short, none of those accommodations which are so necessary to a poor sick traveller. The evil every day became worse, and my strength to support it less; my taste abhorring every thing but wine; there was, therefore, little hope of my living, and that little was

even odious to me. I found myself in this condition on the Danube, a stream so vast and rapid, that not a vessel could be navigated on it did not the pilots avail themselves of the assistance of the men of the country, who are very muscular, strong, and accustomed to danger, and who are always ready with their oars to work the vessel against the fury of the torrent. The place is worthy of the name which it has gained by its famous infamy, 'The Pass of Death.' There is no person so bold who does not fear as the bark makes its way along that track, for it is, in truth, a frightful and formidable undertaking. But, for my part, I was so ill, that having lost all sense of danger or desire of living, I did not care to go out, but kept in the vessel with a few bold men; I hardly know whether I should say stupidly or intrepidly, but I will say intrepidly, since I was within two paces of death and had no fear. At last I reached Vienna, where a physician, neglecting to consider the state of my body, gave me poison instead of medicine, and my disease, instead of being subdued, raged so much the more. You will, perhaps, say that I ought to have been firm, and taken more care of my life. This was the counsel which my common sense, my sickness, and

my strength, the natural desire of life, the love of my creatures, the necessities of my house and children dictated; but my honour gave me a different counsel, which was, that being the head of the embassy, and having upon my shoulders the whole weight of this great and important business, I ought to prefer the service of my master to my life, and prove my zeal in such a manner that the King of Poland might be able to argue from my death in favour of my Prince, instead of suspecting from my life that I was guilty of deceit by not pressing forward to perform those promises which were expected to be fulfilled.

"With this idea in my mind, it is hardly possible to imagine what I suffered in the journey of more than six hundred miles from Venice to Warsaw, not conveyed but dragged and torn along by the vehicle. I know not how I existed. The fever continued unabated; I could neither eat nor sleep, nor was there any remedy for my disorder. The cold was excessive, the annoyances without number, the roads almost uninhabited, and it was generally more tolerable to pass the night in the vehicle which shattered me to pieces in the day, than to be suffocated in the stench of the hovels, —sties, rather, in which the dogs, and the cocks

and hens, and the geese, and the pigs, and the cow, and the children were all mixed together. The difficulty, moreover, of the route is not a little increased by the hordes of robbers who infest the country; and it is necessary to be well escorted, and often to leave the direct road, to avoid falling into their hands, which, notwithstanding, we were more than once near doing, but by Divine goodness I escaped. At length I reached Warsaw, but much more dead than alive. The only ease I find, after having suffered and while still suffering so much, is in the possibility of standing upright instead of being cramped in the vehicle. With regard to rest, I can get none either night or day. My fever is now the least of my miseries; the accidents and circumstances are worse: the place, the season, the food, the drink, the water, the servants, the physic, the physicians, the labour of mind, and a thousand other circumstances contrive to distress me. If I were not thus annoyed, I could struggle against the fever; but I cannot even tell whether my not being able to sleep be the fault of my sickness or of the noise about me. Imagine the whole nation lodged in a little spot of ground, and my chamber in the midst. There is not a place either above, or below, or on either side,—there is not an

hour of the day or night not filled with noise and tumult. There is no particular time here destined to business; here they always traffic, because they always drink, and without wine things fall to the ground. When business terminates, then visiting begins; and when the latter fails, drums and trumpets, bombardings, rumours, shouts, tumults, and every other kind of noise, supply the vacuum. Oh, if I suffered all these torments for the love and glory of God, I should be a martyr. Prepare yourself for every fortune. It is the part only of a simple woman to lament violently the death of a husband who fears not to die. Let others honour me with their tears, do you honour me by your fortitude. I commend to you our children, who, if I die, will have to find in you a father as well as a mother. Support yourself with reflection and manly resolution."

Guarini did not succeed in the main object of the mission, but he preserved the credit of his master uninjured, and Alfonso professed great admiration of the talents by which his pride had been thus kept from receiving any wound. But the poet had too many enemies at court to allow of his reaping the rewards he merited. During his journeys, the most active measures were taken to ruin

his hopes of advancement, and he had not only to contend with the violent fatigues to which he was necessarily exposed, but with the harassing suspicion that, labouring as he was for his Prince, he should be finally suffered to die neglected. Allusion is probably made to these circumstances in scene 1, act 5 of the Pastor Fido, where Guarini is supposed to lament his lot under the character of Carino.

Completely wearied, at length, with disappointment, and finding that, instead of improving his income by living at court, he should be ruining the moderate fortune he possessed, he resolved to retire from Ferrara, and endeavour to content himself in the bosom of his family. In 1582, accordingly, he requested his dismissal from the Duke, and proceeded to his estate in the Polesine of Rovigo, named La Guarina, after his great grandfather, to whom it was granted by Duke Borso, in reward of his services as ambassador to France. But, owing to the situation of this estate, Guarini, it appears, was almost continually engaged in some law-suit to defend his right to possession; and this circumstance, with the pressure of numerous debts, and a family of eight children, some of whom regarded him with little affection, greatly

contributed to prevent his enjoying the repose he had hoped to find in the country. In a letter written from Venice, where he was prosecuting his process, and addressed to Cornelio Bentivoglio, who had married his wife's sister, he describes his present condition in the most melancholy language. "They who complain of me," says he, "remember not my complaints, or what I have so often said of my hard fortune, caused, as is well known, not by an indolent or vicious life, but by all the evils with which Heaven and earth can overwhelm the miserable father of a family, and especially by a most laborious and fruitless servitude of fourteen long years, through which my house has fallen into confusion, and I have lost the means of paying my debts, and providing for the necessities of a large and badly conducted family." After having mentioned that he scarcely could consider himself a poet, and that he had much more important occupations to pursue than writing verses, he continues; "To settle controversies, to sustain actions, to look out for money, to treat with creditors, to make bargains, to form contracts, these are the objects which now fill my mind. My companions are imposing lawyers, lying procurators, perilous tribunals, importunate officials, perfidious *messeti*, co-

vetous men, credulous persons, suspicious spirits; offers which come and go; hopes to-day flourishing, and to-morrow withered; necessity always green; accounts from home always troublesome; wants always pressing, want of money, and still greater want of friends and fidelity. Amid all these distresses and miseries, does your Excellency think that I can invite the Muses to me, or that, if I did, they would inhabit a mind so agitated as mine? The Muses are young, gay, happy, nor do they willingly remain where there is trouble; and, therefore, poetry is very like love, which is nothing more than a kind of thoughtless thought *(pensiro spensierato)*, an idle business, or, as is said, a care without mind. Thus poetry, what is it but a sensible madness, and a distraction of the brain, which it renders so insensible, that it often happens that they who have brains forget they have any, and they who have none, think they have them in abundance. From which most grievous misfortune I will guard myself with all my strength." In the same strain he observes, that Augustus and Mæcenas, and other patrons of poets, bestowed greater gifts on them than on men of science and learning, not because they held them in higher esteem, but because, while the latter every day

increased in sense and capability of providing for themselves, the former lost more and more of their brains by their constant attention to dreams and chimeras, and therefore became poor, and had need of support, and some reward for the loss of their senses, which they suffered by making poetry. "But to return to myself," he continues; "I am now in my forty-fourth year, am the father of eight children, two of which are able to judge of my negligence. I have marriageable daughters; I have the burden of many debts; I have no time for idleness; I should be a madman did I not strive to bring into port what little I have saved from shipwreck." *

But, notwithstanding the pleasure Guarini appears to have taken in ridiculing poets, and the affectation of which he was certainly guilty in pretending to have no ambition to be ranked among the bards of his country, there is every reason to believe that he was in no slight degree jealous of those who enjoyed distinguished reputation. His conduct in correcting Tasso's works, when the afflicted author was prevented from attending to their revision himself, merits the highest admiration; and, were there nothing else recorded of him

* Lettere.

deserving praise, this one circumstance in his life would give him a claim to our commiseration in all the disappointments and troubles of his own career. But, though he felt and acted so generously towards the unfortunate Tasso, he was not the less jealous of his fame, and it is generally believed that his idea of writing the "Pastor Fido" sprang from the feeling of rivalry which was inspired by the applauses of the "Aminta."

However this may be, Guarini devoted some part of the leisure he enjoyed at his estate, and in Padua, where he spent the winter months, in the composition and correction of his celebrated drama, and found, it is probable, in this employment, which he professed to treat with such contempt, more satisfaction, and a better medicine for his harassed mind, than he could ever discover in the pursuits on which he dilates with such rhetorical gravity. But he was not suffered to enjoy the pleasures of retirement, or try the effects of literary relaxation for any length of time. Alfonso, knowing his talents as a man of business, recalled him to court, after he had been absent about three years, and made him Secretary of State.

Guarini, in missions to Umbria and Milan, evinced the same zeal and ability in the service of

his Prince as formerly; but he had scarcely resumed his public avocations, when circumstances of a private nature again put a stop to his career. In the letter quoted above, we find him observing, that two of his children were sufficiently old to form a judgment respecting his conduct. It is not impossible that he meant it to be understood, from this expression, that they had actually constituted themselves his censors; but whether this was the case or not, his treatment of his eldest son was not calculated to preserve either his authority or conduct from being questioned. The young man, it appears, had lately married a lady named Virginia Palmiroli; but, owing either to his want of revenues, or some other cause of a similar kind, he continued to reside with his wife in the mansion of his father. So far, however, was Guarini from contributing to render this arrangement advantageous, that he treated his son with a haughtiness and asperity that rendered the condition of the latter insupportable. Irritated, at length, beyond endurance, he left the house and determined to apply for relief to a court of justice, which he conceived would oblige his father to give up the property belonging to him and his wife which in his rage he retained. The dispute between the father and son

was accordingly brought to trial, and, to the vexation of the former, a verdict was pronounced against him.

It is impossible to decide at this distance of time what were the real merits of this extraordinary case, but there can be no doubt that Guarini acted with little regard to his dignity, when he condescended to seize the property of his son and daughter to satisfy his claims upon them for expenses attending their nuptials. He, however, conceived himself treated with the greatest injustice by the judge who had presided at the trial, and who, it is said, was his personal enemy. There was therefore, perhaps, more reason on his side than is suspected, and we should probably be guilty of much injustice did we condemn him on the little information we possess on the subject. So convinced was he himself that he had not been treated with proper fairness, that he attributed the decision against him in a great measure to the secret interference of the Duke; and under this impression, he addressed a letter to him full of bitter complaint and remonstrance. This unfortunate affair brought back all the feelings of discontent which had occupied Guarini's mind on so many previous occasions: he now considered him-

self treated not merely with neglect, but with the most flagrant ingratitude, and if he before felt that his services, so long and faithfully persevered in, were inadequately rewarded, he now looked upon the Duke as guilty of inflicting on him the worst and most unmerited injuries. Considering, therefore, that he had no longer any reason to waste his strength, or employ his talents in the service of Alfonso, he firmly requested his dismissal from office, resolving to quit a court, without farther delay, where for more than twenty years he had been continually struggling against the cabals of personal enemies, and employing the best energies of his mind to promote the honour of a Prince who regarded him only as a mere instrument to effect his purposes.

Alfonso was by no means pleased at the resolution of his Secretary, and even thought himself treated with ingratitude; but Guarini had determined upon the course he was to take, and suspecting from the known disposition of the Duke* that his liberty might be endangered if he delayed his departure, he hastened from the city as privately as possible, and proceeded to the Court of the Duke of Savoy. That Prince willingly took him into his

* Sup. al Gio. vol. ii. p. 169.

service, and found him so much occupation, that in writing to a friend, he says he was so constantly employed, that "wanting to write a letter, he had not time to do it." From Savoy, however, he was obliged to retreat after a brief stay, alarmed, it is supposed, by the machinations of Alfonso, who was known to have a particular dislike to any of his former ministers being in the employ of other potentates. Padua was his next retreat, and there, in December 1590, he had the misfortune to lose his wife, who seems to have retained his affections throughout the long and unsettled career he had passed since their marriage. A new set of feelings now took possession of his mind. Hitherto he had seen no other means of escaping from the persecutions of fortune, but by seeking shelter in Padua or La Guarina; but now he might flee for protection to the Church, and his wife was scarcely buried when he resolved to hasten to Rome, and assume the ecclesiastical habit. How admirably does a passage in one of his letters show the state of his mind, when breaking from the load of its grief, it caught, with the eagerness of childhood, at the first novelty that rose in his thoughts. "This is so sudden a change and transformation of my life," says he, "that I am induced to believe it has not

occurred, as indeed nothing can, without the intervention of God, who thus summons me to another vocation." The idea, however, of taking orders vanished with the return of his good spirits, and he allowed all thoughts of the kind to be dissipated by an invitation sent him from the Duke of Mantua, to accept an appointment in the Archducal Court at Inspruch. But Alfonso, though five years had now passed since their dispute, had not forgotten his resentful feelings, and Guarini again contemplated a flight to Rome, whither he proceeded, but not, as it appears, with any present idea of entering the Church.

During all the time that the unfortunate father was thus wandering from court to court, his son Alexander enjoyed the protection of Alfonso, and was rising rapidly in rank and influence. Trusting to his favourable situation, and retaining no anger towards his parent, the young man ventured to beseech Alfonso that he would allow his father to settle himself peaceably in the service of some prince; but the Duke haughtily denied the request, and afterwards said to the Duchess of Urbino that the son imitated the father, and cared little for his favour. Alessandro, however, was not to be thus hastily repulsed, and repeating his application, he suc-

ceeded in obtaining both his own and his father's restoration to the Duke's good opinion. The letters which Guarini wrote to Alessandro while this affair was pending, breathe doubt and suspicion in every line, and he cautions his son against snares and spies with all the anxiety of a man who had lived the best part of his days among enemies, and who knew that whoever pursued the same kind of life must encounter an equal number.

Guarini returned to Ferrara with great satisfaction, but old sources of family dispute were again laid open, and Alessandro had to regret that the efforts he had made to obtain his return were only productive of bitter contentions. The return of our poet took place in 1595, and the Duke died in 1597; between those periods no event occurred worth recording, but in May 1598, his daughter Anna fell a victim to the jealousy of her husband, and her murder, and the neglect he suffered at Ferrara, induced him to proceed to Florence, where he was honourably received by the Grand-duke Ferdinand. For some time every thing remained to the poet's satisfaction, but unfortunately his youngest son Guarino, whom he had sent to Pisa to complete his education, formed a connexion with a lady of the place, who was young and beautiful, but poor

and a widow. To increase the evil, the time they fixed for their nuptials was when Ferdinand and Guarini were spending some days in Pisa; and the latter was no sooner made acquainted with the event, than, unable to control his anger, he charged the Duke with having encouraged his son to marry against his will, and immediately left his service. Nor did his anger cease with its first explosion. His son, it appears, was quickly reduced to a very necessitous condition, and when his brother used all his influence to obtain him some assistance, the enraged father replied that he was not bound to support his son's wife; that as he had chosen to take her, he might look to her poverty, and that he would be too happy did he receive any good when he had done nothing but evil. A resentment still more implacable appears in his answer to the letter in which Alessandro informed him of the death of his brother Girolamo, who had also married badly, and gave an account of the measures he had pursued to insure him a becoming burial. "You acted perfectly right," replied Guarini, "in that which respects the soul of the deceased, but I cannot praise you for what you have done for his remains. Such honours become the worthy only, and he was

the enemy of his father, and dishonoured his family. *This is not right* in the sight of Heaven. As he did not think that I, his father, merited obedience, I do not think that he ought to have honour from me; Justice would have changed her nature, did the base receive the respect due only to the good."

On leaving Florence, Guarini hastened to Urbino, which he left dissatisfied, and then returned to Ferrara. He was then sent by the citizens as their representative to the Roman Pontiff. The reception, however, which he met with on this occasion, though flattering, perhaps, in some respects, was not without its annoyances in others. The fame of his Pastor Fido was spread far and near, and there were few persons who had not read or heard it recited. Supposing, therefore, that its scenes really contained any thing highly prejudicial to public morals, the author might naturally look for a reproof from grave, virtuous, and austere-minded churchmen; but too many instances existed of the most charitable forbearance in matters of this sort on the part of the Church, to suffer any fears to arise in Guarini's mind respecting his poem, and it was, therefore, with no little surprise that he heard the Cardinal

tere," both directed against arbitrary power; a volume to which he gave the name of "Misogallo," from the heterogeneous character of its contents; the comedies above mentioned, and several translations from the classics. These various works exhibit very different degrees of merit. His comedies and most of his miscellanea are considered wholly unworthy of his name. Only a few of his satires are exempted from the same censure; but his prose works are celebrated for the strong and unaffected language in which they are written. Of the translations, that which he made of Sallust is esteemed one of the best versions that exist of any author, or in any language: while that which he executed of Virgil, though three times attempted, is equally poor and spiritless. When it is considered at what a comparatively late period Alfieri commenced these labours, how highly must we estimate the natural power and moral strength of his intellect, thus original and thus resolute and laborious.

THE END.

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